73% FUNNIER

FREE WILDERNESS TILES

DRAGON

SHUT UP AND PLAY!

COMPLETE GUIDE TO GAMER ETIQUETTE

BY POPULAR DEMAND

RAISTLIN VS ELMINSTER

HOW TO

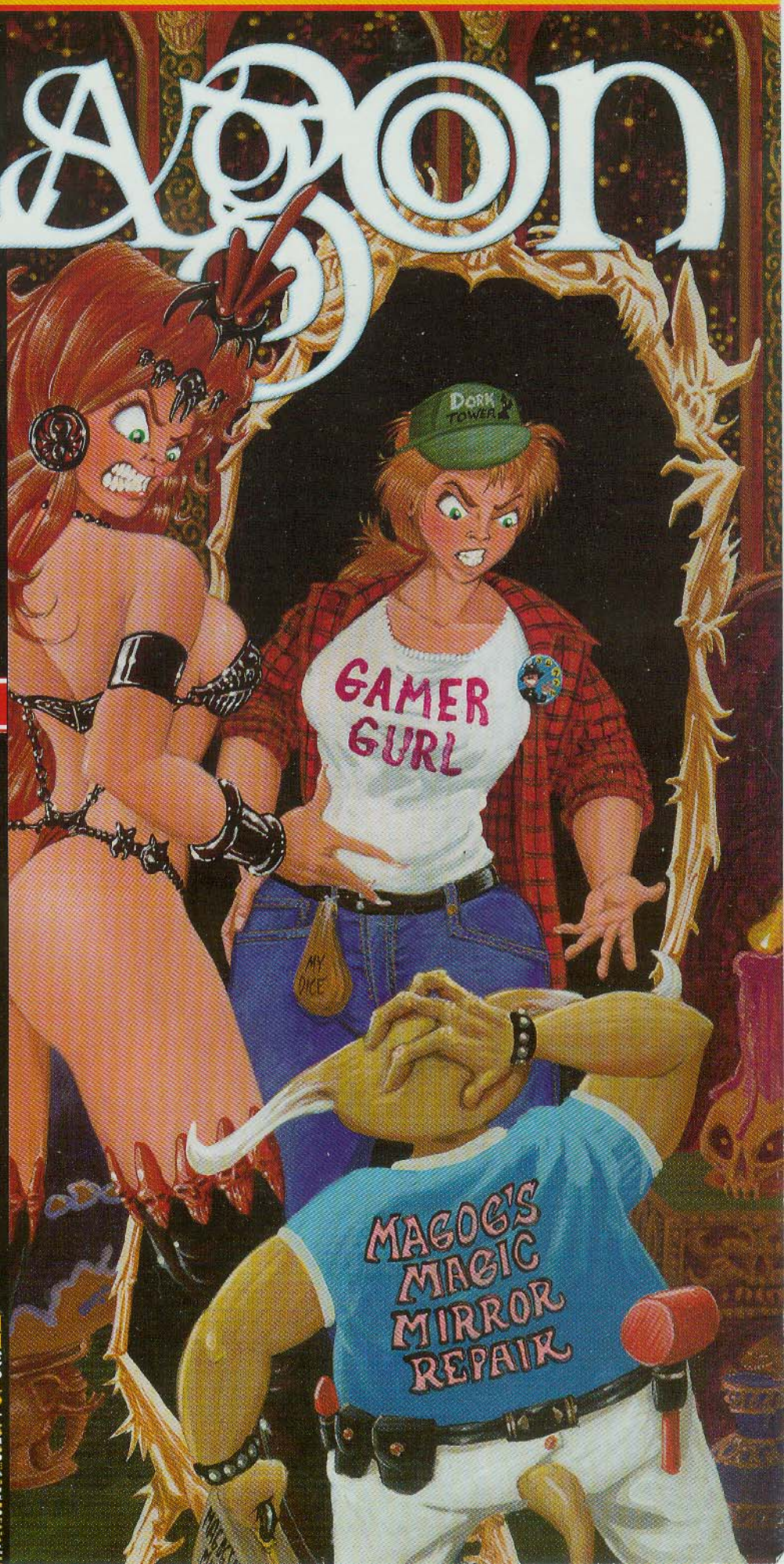
34 MAKE INSANE PUZZLES EASY

104 PAINT FLESH TONES

94 BEAT UP ELVEN BULLIES

50 FIND THE PERFECT D&D GROUP

Plus — BARD ON THE RUN P. 42 • SAGE ADVICE P. 106 A FICTIONAL SHORT STORY P. 60 GYGAX CONTINUES... P. 26 • MUSKRATS, MUSKRATS, MUSKRATS P. 54 • ONE-ETED ORCS P. 54 RUBINE ANNELIDS P. 86 PRODUCT PREVIEWS P. 20 READERS WHO WRITE P. 14 • EDITORIAL MUSINGS P. 5 SORDIDNESS TRAGEDY P. 10 DUED BETTER DUNGEONS P. 112 PUZZLERS P. 30 CURSED PC PORTRAITS P. 96 • PLAYING BETTER CHARACTERS P. 100 • YOLO CONTESTS P. 31 • 3 MOVIES TO D.I. P. 11 • BOTANIC EXPOSED P. 15 • THE TASTE OF LOVECRAFT FEATURING LOBO, HALF-ORDER DOUBLE OF A GAMER, DEMO P. 18 • HOW THE MAYAN CALENDAR SAVED LIVES! P. 24 • MONSTER MENTOR: ASSASSINS, DRUZIL PSIONICS P. 72 • MORE NOT THAT KIND OF MAGIC A STICK 37 • ARMOUR ROLL SHOW ATTENDANCE

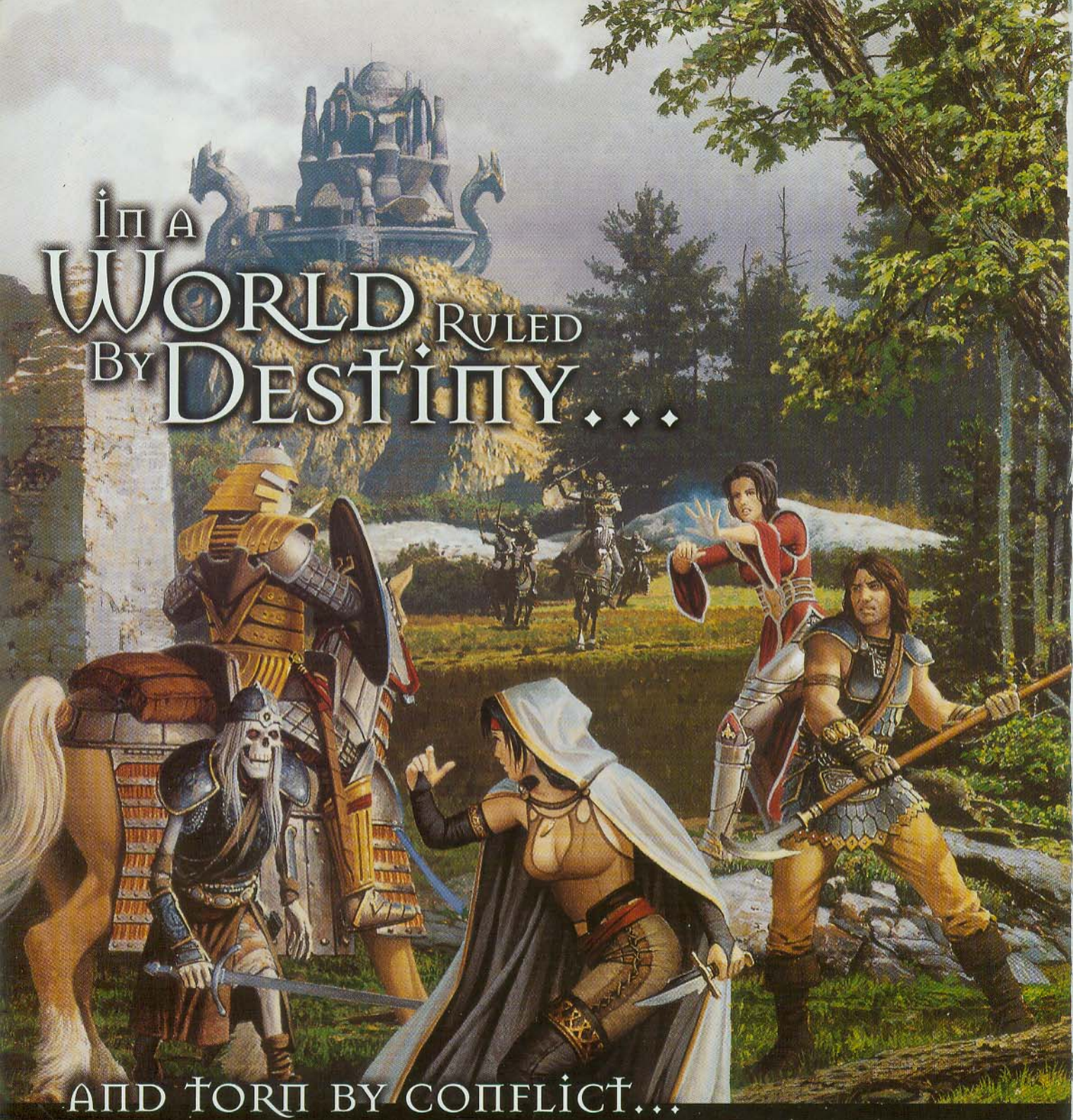


ISSUE 282

$5.99US $8.50CAN

APRIL 2001

0 71658 01823 5



Saviors can be Destroyers.

Game and Software © 2000, 2001 THQ Inc. Developed by Volition, Inc. Summoner, Volition, THQ and their respective logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved. Mac and the Mac logo are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

DORK TOWER
GAMER GURL
MY DICE
MAGOG'S MAGIC MIRROR REPAIR

An epic, original RPG with hundreds of characters.

Full 3D engine shows off amazing spell effects.

Summon powerful creatures to join your party.

Multiplayer adventures for up to 4 players.

TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
Blood

Mac

WINDOWS 95/98

volition

THQ

www.THQ.com

DRAGON Issue 282
Volume XXV, Number 11
April 2001

GAME ROOM

What's new, what's happening, and what's on your mind.

Wyrm's Turn 8
Scale Mail 14
Profiles 18
Previews 20
Convention Calendar 22
Countdown 24
Up On A Soapbox 26

FEATURES

New rules, campaigns, and idea generators.

The Outgoing Goblin's Guide to Gaming 30
Jeff Vogel

Logic Missiles 34
Mike Selinker

Bard on the Run 42
Michael Dean

Meanwhile, Back in the Slime Pits of Karvan 44
Robin D. Laws

D&D Personal Ads 50
Tony Moseley

Heroes of the Underdork 54
Phil Masters

Snack Monsters 56
Mike Mayer

Possessions 60
Elaine Cunningham

FAMILIARS

Humor, puzzles, monsters, magic, and more.

Dork Tower 28
Mind Flayers 70
New Adventures of Volo 71
Rogues Gallery 74
Class Acts 84
Creature Codex 86
Vs. 94
Nodwick 98
Dragonmirth 110
What's New 114

WIZARD'S WORKSHOP

Tools, tricks, and tactics to improve your game.

PC Portraits 96
The Play's the Thing 100
Forum 102
Role Models 104
Sage Advice 106
Dungeoncraft 111

It's exciting to open up the latest package from an illustrator I like. All sorts of questions are on the verge of being answered, such as "Did he enjoy himself?" "Did he hit the mark?" and most importantly, "Did he take it over the top?"

I think the answer to the third question is apparent.

It's probably not necessary to point out that Phil Fogio—illustrator, cartoonist, husband (not mine), father, and long-time DRAGON *contributor—is the diabolical mind and hand behind our special April Fool's cover.*

—Peter Whitley, Art Director

SOMEONE FINALLY MADE A CARD GAME FOR YOU!

- ✔ Hit Points
- ✔ Armor Class
- ✔ Initiative Rolls
- ✔ Big Monsters
- ✔ Fighters, Wizards, Thieves & Clerics
- ✔ Elven Necromancers
- ✔ Dwarven Berserkers
- ✔ Bards & Rangers
- ✔ Critical Hits
- ✔ Good vs. Evil
- ✔ No Bad Movie

AEG
ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

THE GAME YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR IS COMING THIS SPRING!

WARLORD
SAGA OF THE STORM™

THE CARD GAME THAT YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO PLAY.

To Hit Modifier: Add this number to your d20 roll when you're attacking. Remember, 'higher is better,' and a 'natural 20' always hits!

Class / Level / Alignment: Here's where you can tell whether you're a fighter, wizard, rogue, or cleric, how powerful you are, and which side of the battle you're on... all in one convenient place.

+1
Rage
14
2
Dwarf • Blackstone Raider
Action: Once per turn, Rage gains +4 ATK and -4 AC until the end of the turn.
Death is my freedom.

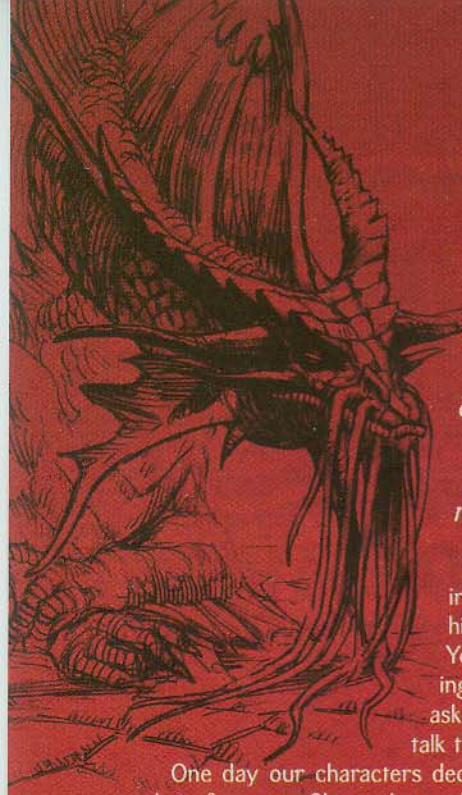
Armor Class: Maybe you've heard of this – if not, this is what prevents your character from getting whacked. The higher the number, the less likely he'll be worm food.

Abilities: Some characters can poke your opponents from afar. Others can attack when your enemy is least expecting it. Rage just goes BERSERK!

Hit Points: Everyone can take a hit, but some guys can take several. Take as many wounds as you have Hit Points, and you're pulverized!

TRY IT BEFORE YOU BUY IT!
FREE DECK & RULES IN THIS ISSUE!

For more info:
www.alderac.com



FUNNY HA-HA

Dungeons & Dragons is a game, so it's only natural that people would have a little fun while playing. Flick a piece of popcorn at the DM, make a pun about the half-orc's axe—it's all good. Likewise, it's good when the characters themselves are funny, maybe carrying on a humorous rivalry or taunting their opponents. It's only when the table humor and the campaign humor get mixed up that things go horribly wrong.

Mike took a turn behind the DM's screen back in college now and then. He wasn't a bad guy, but his wiseass dial was cranked to 11 and stuck there. You'd ask him, "What's up?" He'd say, "The ceiling." That's what he'd say every single time you'd ask him, "What's up." You just had to learn not to talk to him most of the time.

One day our characters decided to ask the weird old gypsy woman to tell their fortunes. She took one look in that dimestore crystal ball of hers and croaked out, "I can't tell you. It's abominable!"

"What?" we demanded. "Tell us what's in our future!"

"It's . . . it's . . . abominable!" she gasped. Mike whirled his hands and choked out, "A . . . BOM . . . IN . . . A . . . BLE!"

That's all the old woman would tell us, and we weren't the sort to slap her around for clarification, so we left shaking our heads.

Not far away, we had to stop to let a herd of cattle cross the road. Somebody in the group asked some questions about the animals and their herder. Mike was unusually receptive to the inquiries, describing the various colors, sizes, and breeds of the smelly beasts. The rest of us ignored him, until he added one last detail: there was a strange sound emanating from one of the bulls. It went, "Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick . . ."

We didn't quite make it out of the blast radius in time.

Mike, for his part, smiled smugly and cloaked himself in the DM's defense that he'd given us all the information we'd needed to avoid the trap. The prophecy we'd just heard should have made us wary of all explosive-bearing bovines. How clearer did we need it? "A bomb in a bull," she'd said.

Nevermind why there's a bomb in my D&D world, I thought. How'd it get in that bull and pointed toward us? The explanation, of course, was that there was no explanation. It was Mike's twisted sense of humor intruding on the game. You just had to know when to stop playing with him.

On the other hand, lots of players still game with Mike each week, so obviously it's a matter of taste. I'm one of those who likes humor at the table and humor in the game, but no crossing of the streams. Keep your darned chocolate out of my peanut butter.

How about you? Write us a note to tell everyone what place humor has in your D&D campaign.

For the past four or five years, we've printed "regular" D&D articles side-by-side with the sillier stuff, which we've used sparingly. While many readers have applauded that choice, this year's April issue is for all those who've pleaded with us for even more wackiness, including the return of the great Phil Foglio as our cover artist. What do you think of this year's April mix? You know how to tell us what you think, and we can't wait to hear it.

Dave Gross • Editor-in-Chief

DRAGON

800-pound Gorilla
Johnny Wilson
Jungle V.I.P.
Dave Gross
Monkey Wrangler
Chris "300-yard stare" Thomasson
Homonkeylous
Matthew "Rock Me Dr. Zaius" Sernett
Barrel of 1000 Monkeys
Ed Greenwood, Robin D. Laws, Christopher "I Wouldn't Know About That, I'm Canadian." Perkins, Mike Selinker, Skip Williams, Ray Winninger
Zeta Male
Peter "Feces Flinger" Whitley
Sea Monkey
Pierce Watters
Howler Monkey
Bob Henning
Brass Monkey
John "No B.S." Dunn
Zookeeper
Dawnelle Miesner

Dragon Magazine (ISSN# 0279-6848) is published monthly for $34.95 per year by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Ave. SW, Renton, WA 98055, United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Renton, WA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO Dragon Magazine, P.O. BOX 469107, ESCONDIDO, CA 92046.

©2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced (except for review purposes) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Material published herein does not necessarily reflect the opinions of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., its employees, or its editorial staff, who are not liable for opinions expressed herein. Most product names are trademarks owned by the companies that publish those products. Use of the name of any product without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status. Wizards of the Coast; TSR; Dungeons & Dragons; Advanced Dungeons & Dragons; D&D; AD&D; Forgotten Realms; Dragonlance; Planescape; Ravenloft; Birthright; Mystara; Spellfire; Greyhawk; Dark Sun; Spelljammer; Al-Qadim; Council of Wyrms; Masque of the Red Death; Monstrous Compendium; Alternity; Star*Drive; Dark•Matter; Alien Compendium; Fifth Age; Dungeon Master; Player's Option; Dragon; Dungeon; Polyhedron; Living City; Living Greyhawk; Gen Con; RPGA are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Star Wars is a registered trademark of Lucasfilm Ltd. ©1999 Lucasfilm Ltd. All rights reserved.

*©1995, 1996, and 1998 Nintendo, Creatures, GAMEFREAK. Pokémon, Jungle, Fossil,Gym Heroes, Team Rocket, Game Boy, Gotta catch 'em all, and the official Nintendo Seal are trademarks of Nintendo. ©2000 Nintendo of America.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Contact Publishers Creative Systems at Dragon@pcspublink.com or call 1-800-395-7760. In the UK, contact kay.palmer@tnsofres.com or call +44-18-58-41-4713.

ADVERTISING: Contact *Dragon Magazine's* Advertising Sales Director, Bob Henning, at 425-204-7262. All ads are subject to approval by Wizards of the Coast, which reserves the right to reject any ad for any reason. Advertisers and/or agencies of advertisers agree not to hold Wizards of the Coast liable for any loss or expense from alleged wrongdoing that may arise out of the publication of such advertisements.

Northeastern Advertising Representatives: Sig or Scott Buchmayr, Buchmayr Associates, 137 Rowayton Avenue, Rowayton, CT 06853, (203) 855-8834.

Distribution Nationally and Internationally by Curtis Circulation Company, 730 River Road, New Milford, NJ 07646. Tel: 201-634-7400. Fax: 201-634-7499

Printed in the U.S.A.

A sparkling crystal adorns each playing piece!

Join the forces of good and evil as they battle to possess the Crystal!

Fantasy of the Crystal Chess Set

Remarkably detailed pewter sculptures; chessboard included at no extra charge!

Discover the magic world of the *Fantasy of the Crystal!* A world of mystical characters—all battling to capture the power of the Crystal and make it their own!

Exquisitely crafted.

Whether you join Melda, the Witch Queen...or side with wizards and warlocks, this exquisite chess set will keep you spellbound.

Each piece is crafted of lustrous, antiqued pewter and features an extraordinary level of detail. A sparkling, multi-faceted cut crystal adorns each playing piece. The elegant hardwood chessboard contains a convenient storage compartment, and is included at *no extra charge.*

Superb value.

Created exclusively for the Danbury Mint, the *Fantasy of the Crystal Chess Set* comes with an exciting booklet describing the characters and their battle for mastery of the Crystal. Each piece is attractively priced at just $19.95 (plus $2.95 shipping and handling). You will receive playing pieces at the rate of two every other month. You need pay for only one piece per month. Your satisfaction is guaranteed. Return your Reservation Application today!

Arfon the Warrior (King)
Melda the Witch (Queen)
Castle of Hope (Rook)
Beldin the Dragon (Knight)
Alberich the Dwarf (Pawn)
Pieces shown smaller than actual size.

Chessboard shown much smaller than actual size of 18½" x 18½" x 3".

the Danbury Mint

© MBI

RESERVATION APPLICATION

The Danbury Mint
47 Richards Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06857

Send no money now.

Fantasy of the Crystal Chess Set

Yes! Please accept my reservation for the *Fantasy of the Crystal Chess Set*, as described in this announcement.

Name: _____
Please Print Clearly

Address: _____

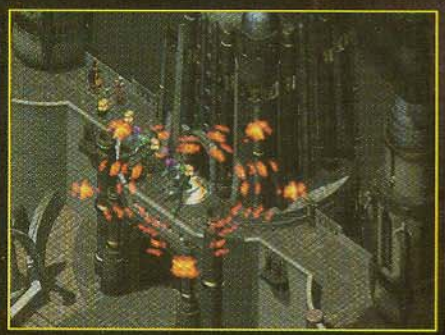
City: _____

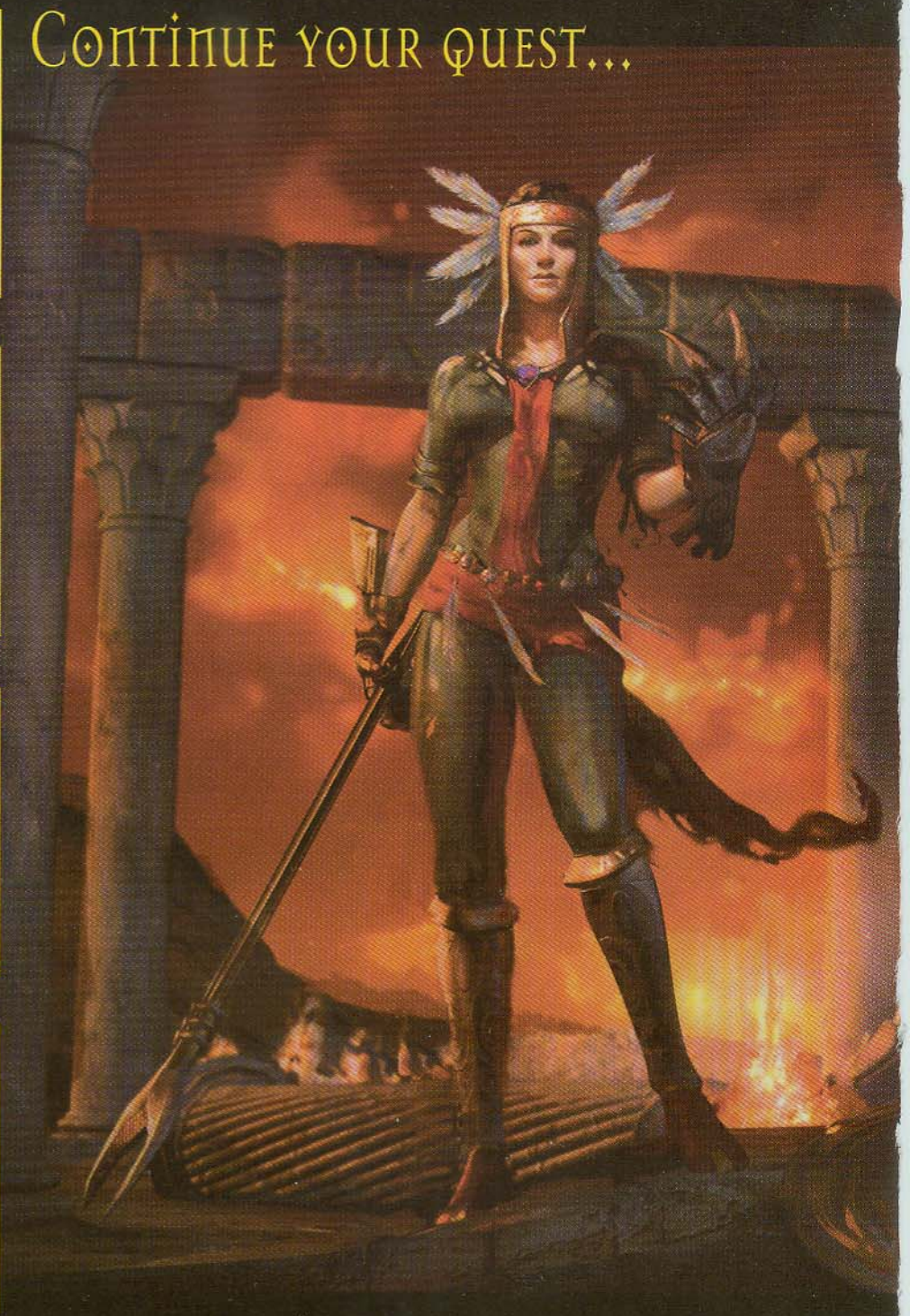
State: _____ Zip: _____

Signature: _____
Orders subject to acceptance.

Allow 2 to 4 weeks after payment for initial shipment. 1003E030

Continue your quest...





RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

REQUIRED Windows 95/98 REQUIRED

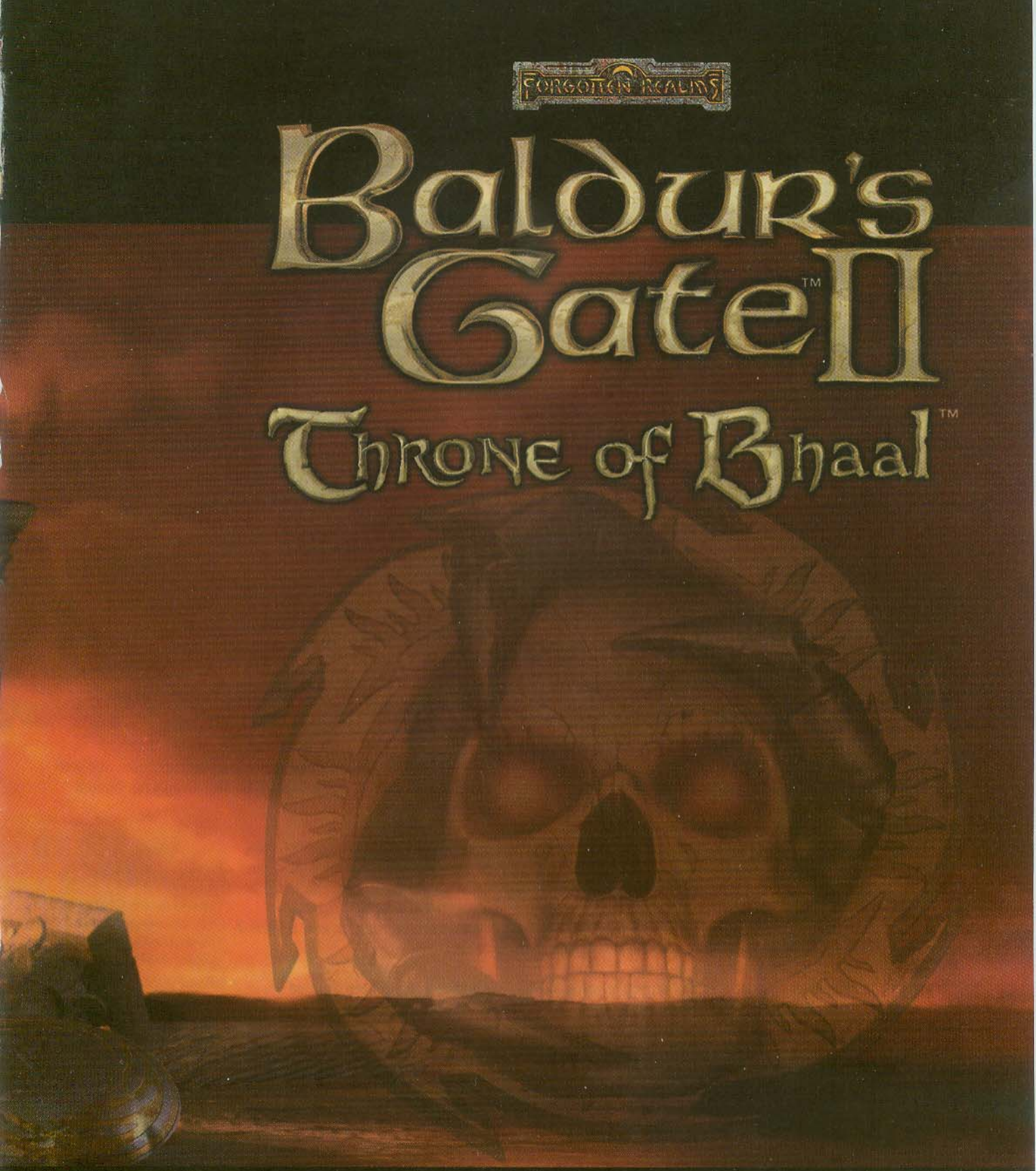
Developed By: BioWare Corp

Black Isle Studios™

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

Official Wizards of the Coast Licensed Product

BALDUR'S GATE II: THRONE OF BHAAL: Developed and © 2000, 2001 BioWare Corp. All Rights Reserved. Baldur's Gate, Throne of Bhaal, Shadows of Amn, Forgotten Realms, the Forgotten Realms logo, Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, the AD&D logo, and the Wizards of the Coast logo are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used by Interplay under license. All Rights Reserved. BioWare, the BioWare Infinity Engine and the BioWare logo are trademarks of BioWare Corp. All Rights Reserved.



Black Isle Studios and the Black Isle Studios logo are trademarks of Interplay Entertainment Corp. All Rights Reserved. Exclusively licensed and distributed by Interplay Entertainment Corp.
All other trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

THE GAME

You will be playing Warlord after you read this. We know, because we're giving you a FREE deck in this issue of Dragon™ Magazine to make it easy for you. You'll want to play because the game is fast and fun. Heck, we're even going to teach you how to play in four easy steps!

THE BASICS

First, absorb these basic rules. You're going to have characters on the table, performing all the game actions; you don't attack the other player, you attack his cards; and the only way to win is to knock out the other player's Warlord. To do that you're going to be attacking until you hack, shoot, and conjure your way to the other player's Warlord. Lastly, there are set places to play the cards. There's also a 20-sided die, which you roll for all attacks and to determine the first player for each turn.

SETUP

Take out the free 25-card deck you received with this issue. Unwrap the puppy and thumb through the cards. Have a friend buy an issue and do the same. Both of you should find a 20-sided die as well. While looking at your cards, you'll notice that a few card fronts look a little different from each other. That's because we're giving you three kinds of cards to work with: characters, items, and actions. We'll cover them fully in just a bit.

In each game you'll be starting with five characters in play, plus your Warlord. Just pull out the characters with their names in blue, and put all Level 1 characters side-by-side in a row, and your Level 2 characters in a row behind the first. Drop your Warlord into the third row.

Your characters are arranged in rows, or "ranks." Each character card in your deck enters play in the rank equal to his level. So, a Level 1 character comes into play in rank one, a Level 2 in rank two, etc.

Another thing to keep in mind is that each rank must contain at least as many characters as the rank behind it. For example, two characters in the first rank and one in second rank is legal. Two in the first rank and two in second rank is also legal. Two in first rank and three in the second rank is *illegal*. When your characters form an illegal formation, you must immediately react by achieving a legal one.

To achieve a legal formation, one of your characters has to move forward one rank, and the only way to move a character is to *spend* him. This movement is a reaction that does not "use up" your next action. If you move forward a spent character in this way, he then becomes *stunned*.

WARLORD LINGO

***Spend** means rotate the cards 90° clockwise. After you spend cards, they are spent. (Pretty simple huh?)*

***Ready** means straighten your spent cards.*

***Stunned** is where your cards get turned upside down (i.e. turned 180° from their original ready facing). You don't straighten normally from being stunned; you move first to Spent, and when you're able to ready again, then you straighten.*

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

PLAYING THE GAME

Once all of your characters with blue titles are placed into their ranks, take all your other cards, shuffle them and place them face down to make a play deck. Each player draws five cards, and rolls his die for initiative. Highest roll goes first. The first player then takes an action (we'll cover the different types next). The other player then takes an action. Everyone alternates until both players say "pass," one after the other. When that happens, the turn is over. Straighten your spent cards, then change your stunned ones to spent. Discard any cards you didn't want in your hand, and draw back up to five cards. Roll your dice again to see who goes first next round.

There are several kinds of actions you can take:

Attack! Declare your target (a character on the opposing side) and spend one of your guys to make the attack. Only characters in the front rank can attack, and they can only attack the other player's front rank. For the attack, roll a d20, add your attacking character's Attack Bonus (ATK) to see if it's at least as high as the target's Armor Class (AC). If it is, you've caused a wound. Once a character takes a number of wounds equal to his hit points, he is dead and moved to the discard pile.

Characters with multiple bonuses get to make multiple attacks on the same action. They can attack a different target with each attack if they want to, or they can keep attacking the same target.

Some characters make "Ranged:" attacks. That means that they can launch an attack at a character two ranks away.

Play an Action card from your hand. This is just like it sounds: play an Action card out of your hand. Make sure to identify which character is performing the action. Remember to check the action's class and level requirements. Action cards go to the discard pile after you play them

Play an Item card from your hand onto one of your characters. Each character can only equip one Weapon, one Steed, etc. This is the only tricky rule. To equip a character with an item: add his level to the rank he is currently in, and compare that to the item's level. (For example: a Level 2 character in the third rank can equip a Level 5 Item).

Put a Character into play. Play a character from your hand into the rank equal to his level. You may not play a card from your hand that would form an illegal formation.

Use an action printed on a card in play. Some cards say to *spend* to activate a card effect. This means you must spend your character to use the effect.

Move a Character in play. *Spend* a character to move him forward or back by one rank. If you make an illegal formation, you must fix it immediately.

Say "I pass." You don't do anything. If both players pass, one after the other, the turn ends.

ITEMS

❶ ***Attack Bonus Modifier:*** *When attached to a character, any number here adds to his Attack Bonus.*

❷ ***Armor Class Modifier:*** *Just as you thought, this number adds to a character's Armor Class.*

❸ ***Class/Level Restriction:*** *This is what you need to worry about to actually use an Item. There are some Items that are only for Warriors, others only for Wizards, etc.; some cards are usable by the lowest level grunts, others are for high-level heroes only. Items with ovals can be used by any class.*

❹ ***Special Abilities:*** *Again, tricky rule-bending things go here. Keep an eye out for spending vs. non-spending abilities.*

ACTIONS

❶ ***Class/Level Restrictions:*** *Just like Items, this will tell you who can use each action.*

❷ ***Effect:*** *Follow what the card says and you'll be fine. Some cards are "React:" cards. These don't use up your action. Play them when the card says to, even during another player's action.*

CHARACTERS

❶ ***Attack Bonus:*** *When you attack the other player's characters, this will tell you if you're making a strong or weak attack... or maybe even if you're making more than one attack!*

❷ ***Armor Class:*** *This is the number that shows how difficult it is to actually hurt the character. The higher the number, the better.*

❸ ***Level:*** *The number inside the symbol is the character's level (ranging from one to five). Again, higher is better.*

❹ ***Class:*** *The symbol shows the character's profession: either Fighter (flag), Rogue (hand), Wizard (scroll), or Cleric (starburst). Classes are important because some Action cards are only usable by certain classes.*

❺ ***Descriptive Text/Special Abilities:*** *This area shows specific, targetable traits of your cards, or tells what abilities your character can do.*

❻ ***Hit Points:*** *When the character takes this many wounds, he's dead!*

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

SCALE MAIL

Arms Race

One thing I liked about the new edition was that it was a chance to relevel the playing field. And they did a good job of making sure everything was balanced. However the teasers for FORGOTTEN REALMS have already started the arms race. Anyone creating a character from just the core books is now at a disadvantage.

It doesn't take a calculator to show that Luck of Heroes, which gives +1 on three types saves, is more powerful than Great Fortitude, Iron Will, and Lightning reflexes, which each give +2 to one save. Half elves with drow blood get their low light vision upgraded to darkvision for free (or the article in *DRAGON Annual* #5 on page 102 forgot to mention what they have to give up in trade.) The attribute modifiers for a wild elf are overpowered according to page 24 of the DUNGEON Master's Guide.

Granted, these might seem like minor things, but I was able to pull three concrete examples of unbalancing elements out of one article. How many are going to be in the entire book? And this is just the first major release. The next release has to be at least as pumped up as FORGOTTEN REALMS or people will complain that it's weak. As I said, the arms race has begun.

Tome Wyrm
Lowell, FL

We strive to make the Countdown articles as accurate as possible, but previews are by nature incomplete. Thus, balancing factors for some rules don't appear in a preview but exist in the actual product. Also, previewed information sometimes changes by the time the product sees print. Even so, in some cases your ideal of balanced might simply differ from the decisions of the designers. For instance, a +2 bonus to one save is a more concentrated benefit, while a +1 to three different saves is a greater numerical benefit. Take a look at the hardcover FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign in June for the final version of all the new rules.

For "Bards on the Run"

Who let the Bards out? WHO, WHO, WHO, WHO?

Who let the Bards out? WHO, WHO, WHO, WHO?

Please finish!

We miss the "Bards on the Run."

Anonymous

Okay, so we didn't snag the Baha Men, but the Bard is back due to popular demand for more humor in this year's April issue. If you like it, let us know, and we'll see whether we can arrange a return engagement for 2002.

Minus Minus

George Krashos's excellent account of "Soargar's Legacy" in *DRAGON* 277 was thoroughly enjoyable and contributes richly to my Inner Sea and Old Empires campaign plans.

I noticed a typo, and possibly a tiny inconsistency. In the description of Ashram, it's noted that it was claimed by a Narfelli warrior during the "invasion of Mulhorand in the Year of the Clipped Wings (623 DR) . . ." Well, we know from FR10 that this invasion took place in -623 DR. So there's a typo; big deal. My question is regarding the Roll of Years. Should I disregard the previously held notion that the Roll sort of "begins" at -400 DR and make a note on my cobbled timeline that -623 DR is the Year of the Clipped Wings . . . or should that note be found 623 years *after* the raising of the Standing Stone?

On a related note, I'm assuming that the impending release of the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting will include a timeline like the one found in Running the Realms (2nd Edition)? Will that timeline include a complete (or more complete) Roll of Years?

Joel Ehrig
Stockton, CA

We asked the traffic cop of all campaign settings, Rich Baker.

The Year of the Clipped Wings is indeed -623, so the Roll begins earlier than previously believed.

The new timeline is about the same length as the old one, but it has fewer entries and more overall description of events. It also includes entries from much farther in the past, and of course events since 1368, since the new campaign picks up in 1372.

Unsafe at Any Speed

I just wanted to take a moment of your time to say:

The new DRAGON kicks ass!

You nutty people are doing a great job! The art not only reflects your new design philosophy but is just plain great. The magazine layout is eye-catching and inventive; it makes you think! The

SHARE OFF YOUR OPINION

MAIL "SCALE MAIL"
DRAGON Magazine
1801 Lind Avenue S.W.
Renton, WA 98055, USA

EMAIL SCALEMAIL@WIZARDS.COM
Include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed, and let us know how much of that address you'd like printed. (We'll assume city and state, otherwise.)

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

EMAIL DRAGON@PCSPUBLINK.COM
CALL 1 (800) 395-7760

Infogrames and Spellbound Present

DESPERADOS

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

THE POSSE THAT SLAYS TOGETHER STAYS TOGETHER.

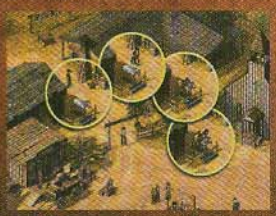
Real-good, real-time, team-based adventure strategy!

25 action-packed missions.

Six integrated tutorial missions. Learn each character's specialties.

Full Motion Video cut-scenes and dialogue-supported plot.

Gunfights. Bank robberies. Stealth missions. Awesome escapes.



Dynamite, knives, six-shooters - select your weapon to defeat the enemy.

Unique environments from ghost towns and steamboats to gold mines and swamps.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Spellbound

INFOGRAMES

Coming March 2001
www.desperados-us.com

Desperados © 2001 Infogrames Europe S.A. All rights reserved. Published and distributed by Infogrames Inc. Infogrames and the Infogrames logo are the trademarks of Infogrames Entertainment S.A. Desperados is the trademark of Infogrames, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

graphics are wonderful, I even love the funky typeset. And insane clowns! Go for it! If the new D&D is truly about "challenging perceptions," then *DRAGON* is doing its job of supporting the game perfectly.

So please don't be too put off by negative responses. The dissatisfied are traditionally more vocal than the satisfied. If you print my letter, let me say to all who are reading: If you like what you see and haven't written to say so, do it now! Do not let our magazine be usurped by the whiners.

The oldest roleplaying game has been made the best roleplaying game by some of the most talented people in the industry—people who obviously love the game. The game is no longer lifeless, staid, and worst of all, safe. I do not want to play a game that was designed with a paranoid parent or conservative fanatic in mind. I want a game that was made for me and my friends, and I have it. Demons and devils are back, baby. Bring 'em on! I'll gladly send 'em back to Hell.

Kerstan Szczepanski
Henderson, NV

Thanks for the moral support, Kerstan. In fact, we receive far more supportive letters than we can print, because "Dragon Rulz!" gets stale fast. We try to print the most interesting letters, and sometimes those are the most critical—and often the critical letters are the most useful. Even when they're not useful, we have fun mocking the writers during our weekly staff meeting.

Second Glance

When I got my issue today in the mail, I didn't think much of the artwork until I read Peter Whitley's comments on Rebecca Guay's piece. I looked at it a second time, and I realized he was right. It is an exceptional piece. While not in the classic old TSR vein of Parkinson, Elmore, and Butler, it sure does have a mood to it that is kind of neat. I'm glad he made the comment on it, or I might not have noticed. Later, in the "Scale Mail" section, Peter makes a humorous apology to the readers because of the lack of visible flesh. I thought that was funny and wry at the same time.

I need to comment on the price hike. It doesn't bother me right now because I just signed up for three years at the old price. Heck I would have signed up for five if I could have! The magazine is really good.

I would like to comment on Johnny L. Wilson's offerings as added bonuses to the magazine. First the dungeon tiles. I don't know about anyone else, but I can't play the new edition of the game without miniatures. Combat is so tactical now, that we use this big mat that we draw on and erase as we go through our adventures. So providing nice tiles in *DRAGON* is welcome. But what really gets me excited are the planned CD-ROM additions. Those sound great. Give me a *free DUNGEON* adventure—I'll take that. I can always use more handy electronic utilities; the PC portraits all gathered together is awesome too. You know, I have a suggestion. All my players use the CD-Rom that came with the *Player's Handbook* for their characters. We're anxiously awaiting a finished version that is more versatile. It would be awesome if we have a *huge* collection of PC portraits to choose from when that program is finally available. Anyway, I'm looking forward to the CD-ROMs, as well as the bonus issues of other magazines. I play only D&D right now, but if the other games look good, I'm open to trying them.

On another topic, someone complained about "Nodwick" revealing secrets of adventures. My take on this topic is that I welcome Nodwick's adventures in published adventures. I like identifying with elements of a game I've seen before or been involved in. Seeing him in the Village of Hommlet is a *hoot*. Keep it up.

As for fathers' teaching their children to play D&D: My two boys are six and four, and the six-year-old is just busting to learn how to play. He is a big *Diablo II* fan, so I suspect it won't be long till he can handle some of the basics in D&D. I've told him that, when he turns seven, I will include him in a game.

About J. Gregory Keyes . . . all I can say is *awesome*. Keep him coming.

PC Portraits was awesome, again.

Jason F. Smith
P.O. Box 460 • Heber City Ut 84032

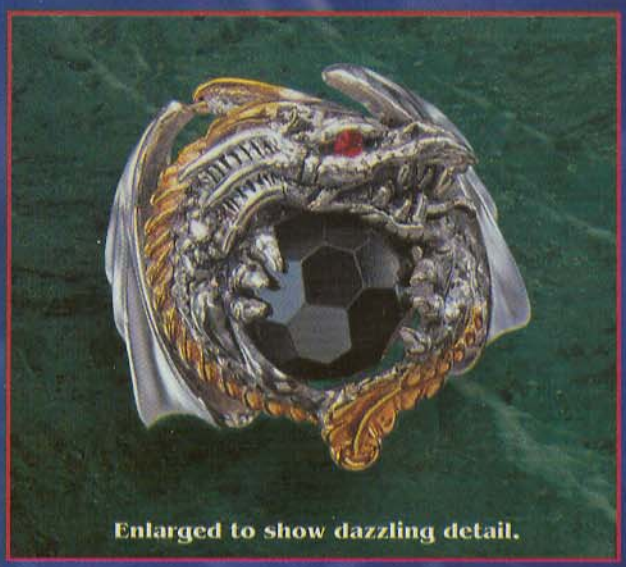
Greg Keyes's Fool Wolf stories are garnering praise. He's busy on several very cool novel projects at present, so it might take a while—but we want to see more Fool Wolf stories, too, and will keep nagging him.

Join us next month for a celebration of that most neglected of D&D classes, the cleric. Until then, keep your email and postcards coming! D

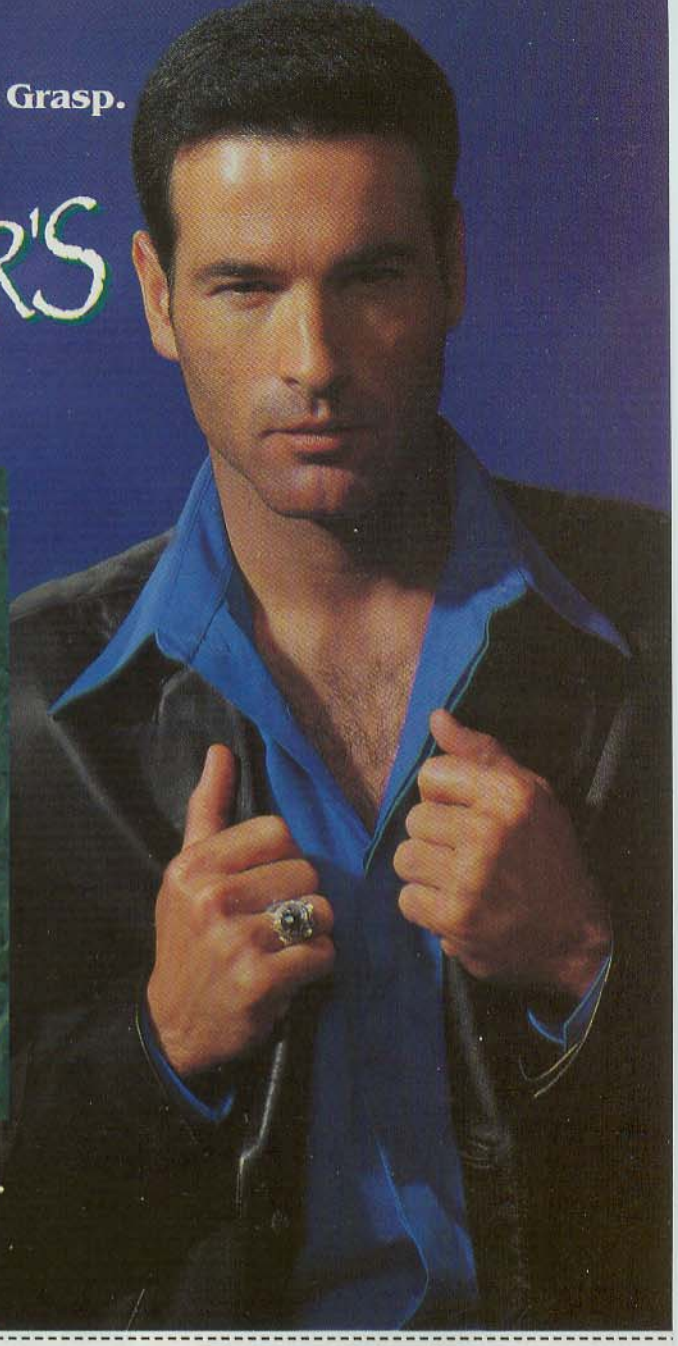
Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
WHO DARES TO PROFANE MY LAIR?
CAN IT, LICH-BOY!
WE KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR DEAL WITH THE NAUGHTY-POO-HEAD GOD XIRORC: ANNOYER OF WORLDS! WE'LL STOP YOUR PLAN TO BRING HIM TO THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE, YOU ICKY-FACE!
THEN I HAVE BUT ONE COURSE OF ACTION...
APRIL FOOL!
DID THE GUARDS AND HUMANOIDS WE HACKED OUR WAY THROUGH KNOW THEY WERE SACRIFICING THEMSELVES FOR COMEDY??
NOT REALLY, BUT I MAKE SURE THAT ALL OF MY EMPLOYEES ARE GOOD SPORTS.

The Secrets of the Universe are Within Your Grasp.

The DRAGONMASTER'S Ring



Enlarged to show dazzling detail.



A fiery ruby blazes from the eye of the dragon.
Center stone of faceted genuine hematite.
Sculpted of solid sterling silver.
Accented in 24 karat gold.

Ring shown approximately actual size.

Dare to search out your dreams. Dare to stand tall, and proudly conquer the dragons that guard your path to true discovery. And when you do, the secrets of the universe will be your prize.

The DragonMaster's Ring. Boldly wrought of solid sterling silver, the mighty dragon is masterfully sculpted and richly accented in gleaming 24 karat gold. His eye glows with the fire of a blazing ruby. In his razor sharp talons, a faceted stone of genuine hematite. A ring that, once possessed, is a dynamic symbol of personal power and pride. It will arrive in a deluxe presentation case, complete with a Certificate of Authenticity attesting to its precious material content and original design. Just $195. *Exclusively* from The Franklin Mint.

Sharing Your Passion For Collecting

The DragonMaster's Ring

Please mail by April 30, 2001.

The Franklin Mint • Franklin Center, PA 19091-0001

Please enter my order for *The DragonMaster's Ring*, a boldly original man's ring available exclusively from The Franklin Mint.

I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will be billed in 5 equal monthly installments of $39.* each, with the first payment due prior to shipment.

**Plus my state sales tax and a one-time charge of $5.95 for shipping and handling.*

SIGNATURE _____
ALL ORDERS ARE SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE

MR/MRS/MISS _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

ADDRESS _____ APT. # _____

CITY/STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # (_____) _____

21171-25-001

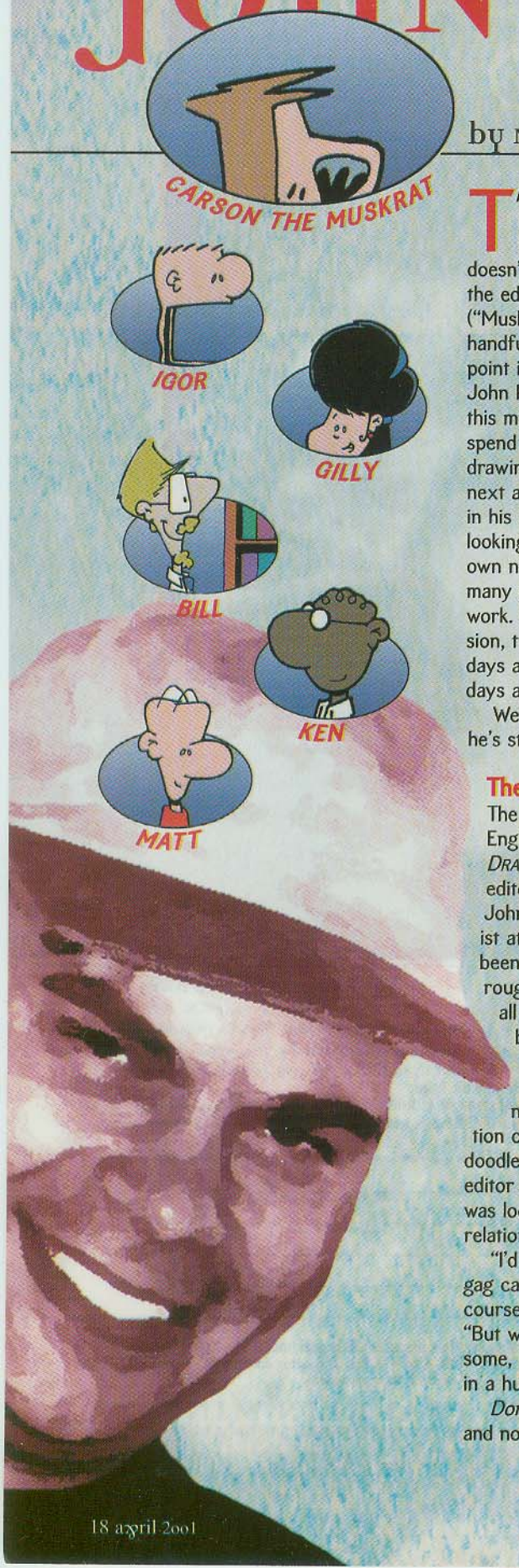
To assure a proper fit, a ring sizer will be sent prior to shipment.
PERFECT FIT IS GUARANTEED. If the ring does not fit when you receive it, you may return it for replacement.

THE FRANKLIN MINT

www.franklinmint.com

JOHN KOVALIC

by Michael G. Ryan



The Unspeakable Oaf. Dork Tower. Wild Life. Murphy's Rule. Help Wanted. Beached. And this list doesn't include the game illustrations, the editorial cartoons, his own website ("Muskrat Central"), comic books, and a handful of other projects. At some point in appreciating the cartoons of John Kovalic, you come to realize that this man must not sleep. Ever. He must spend all day every day parked at his drawing table, diligently penciling the next adventure of Matt, Igor, and Ken in his *Dork Tower* strips, never once looking at the clock or considering his own needs because he knows that so many of us are out here, waiting for his work. Cartoons must be his sole passion, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three-hundred-sixty-five days a year.

Well, that's his story, anyway, and he's sticking to it.

The New Dragon

The thirty-eight-year-old gamer from England first joined forces with *Dragon* in 1997, when John met the editor at the Gen Con game fair. John was already a working cartoonist at the time, *Dork Tower* having been running in *Shadis* magazine for roughly a year. "I'd been cartooning all my life," he admits, "but strips began in high school, when my friend Adrian started a comic strip in the back of his physics notebook. This began a long tradition of paying more attention to my doodles than to my studies." When the editor suggested to John that *Dragon* was looking for single-panel cartoons, a relationship was born.

"I'd never really done single-panel gag cartoons," he admits now (of course, it didn't come up back in '97). "But when *Dragon* said they needed some, I taught myself the form . . . in a hurry."

Dork Tower, which continues to grow and now runs in *Dragon*, "popped out of nowhere," John says. The three main characters have changed little since their creation in 1996, though Carson the Muskrat (imported from John's other strip, *Wild Life*) has undergone radical changes since his inception in 1978. As *Dork Tower* grew, John began to understand that he had quite the following underway. This led to a much higher demand for product.

THE WILD LIFE (1988)

YOU KNOW, IF YOU WANT TO BE A GREAT WRITER, YOU HAVE TO WRITE WHAT YOU FEEL.
YOU HAVE TO TRY TO EXPRESS YOUR HOPES. YOU HAVE TO TRY TO EXPRESS YOUR FEARS. YOU HAVE TO TRY TO EXPRESS WHAT YOU FEEL.
I FEEL HUNGRY.
TRY AGAIN.

"I realized that I had enough strips to collect into a comic book," he says, "and that if I tried really hard, I could put out more comic books." So, with the creation of *Dork Tower* #1, John entered a whole new—and highly successful—career phase. "I knew the comic book was a hit," he says, "when a retailer came up to me at Gen Con in 1998, shook my hand, and said, 'Thank you for making me money.'"

The Newbies & SnapDragons

John's catalog of cartoons goes well beyond *Dork Tower*, and his work with Liz Rathke has been particularly successful. The two of them collaborate on the strips *Newbies* and *SnapDragons*.

"*Newbies* started off as an attempt to do my old comic strip *Wild Life* with humans," he says. And *SnapDragons* came to life via a request from a Nickelodeon executive who enjoyed

Dork Tower and was interested in seeing John do something more in line with the TV channel's demographics. "Since then, it's grown into much more than that," he concedes, "and in fact, I've yet to send it back to the folks at Nickelodeon."

Both will soon appear in what John calls "a couple of very large publications . . . but with negotiations still ongoing, I don't really want to name names just yet." (The disclaimer that followed this cryptic announcement suggests that fans should check for updates at www.kovalic.com; it might not be quite as cryptic as it seems.)

He's also recently been asked to create some animated editorial cartoons for television, a venture he'd love to pursue "if I can find the time," he says.

The Current 365

The old days of working 15 or 16 hours a day have passed, but John still shoots for a solid 12-hour day. "I don't mind working from 6 to 6 at all," he says. "But I'm in this for the fun now." He keeps a framed letter from *Peanuts* creator Charles Schultz on his wall, inscribed with the best advice he's ever received: "Just work as hard as you can, and always be yourself." In this year alone, he's seen four games that he worked on (*Apples to Apples, Shipwrecked, Bosworth*, and *Chez Geek*) make it into the Games 100 list in *Games Magazine*. "The best *Apples to Apples* combination I ever played was 'Walt Disney' on the card 'Animated,'" he says with pride.

His talent and fans haven't erased all of John's insecurities about his work, however. "Matt, the *Dork Tower* gamemaster (or Dicemaster, in *Warhamster*) was supposed to be the character who was my alter-ego," he laments. "But if I'm honest, I have to say that Carson is the character I identify with most. He's slightly clueless, dies often in the games, and is a bit befuddled by the world."

Befuddlement notwithstanding, John has carved quite a future path for himself. After parting company with Corsair Publishing in 2000, he formed his own company, Dork Storm Press. (For more on John's works and Dork Storm Press, see **www.kovalic.com**.) In addition to *Dork Tower*, Dork Storm Press publishes *Nodwick*. *Dork Tower* continues to run three times a week on **www.GameSpy.com** and weekly at *Interactive Week*, an impressive mainstream Internet magazine. This fall, he plans to publish his first collection of strips from these two sources as well as from his numerous *Dragon* strips. "It'll be a large book," he concedes. He also recently announced his intention to "retire" from game illustrations to concentrate on cartooning. "Unfortunately, I've also had to take a sabbatical from editorial cartooning," he says. "But I am making time for gaming. I'm gearing up for both the 3rd Edition and *Star Wars* games."

Naturally, he looks at his entire body of work with the eyes of a father. "It's hard to choose favorites," he says. "I'm proudest of the main story in *Dork Tower* #11. I like the construction of the story, as well as the fact that nobody's yet claimed they could see the ending coming." Of his recent work, he cites, "the one where Bill and Igor are mocking a movie that got its medieval weaponry wrong. The other day, I started howling at a made-for-TV movie on *Atilla the Hun* that had Romans in mid-first century armor . . . then I realized that I'd become one of the characters in Dork Tower."

TWENTY YEARS IN 200 WORDS OR LESS

John's history of D&D is as broad as anyone's, including those of Matt, Igor, and Ken:

I was in a tiny store in London called Games Workshop when I spied a small white box labeled Dungeons & Dragons on the shelves. They also had a photocopied dungeon adventure; I was hooked immediately.

I still remember my friend Andrew's reaction as I starting running that dungeon: "You're making it up as you go along!" (I still get that reaction from my players these days, by the way.)

When AD&D came along, we were in Nirvana; we formed a school gaming society. At the University of London, I got into *Traveller* a lot more, since I was studying Astrophysics. London was probably the height of my gaming days. When I transferred to the University of Wisconsin, I started a degree in Economics. I could literally skip two out of three classes and still get A's (don't try this at home, kids!). This let me hang out at the student newspaper offices a ton, and that's where *Wild Life* first went daily. But my gaming suffered.

In the late '80s, I hooked up with the owners of Pegasus Games, and they invited me to their weekly session. Slowly, I got back into it. After *Dork Tower* took off, I had to cut back, though. My New Year's resolution for 2001 was to get more gaming in, however, so I have my fingers crossed. My best cartoons almost always come from direct gaming experiences. The strip where the gamers' characters follow a demon into hell is based directly on a gaming experience, though I usually have to tone down what my players do in the comic book. Otherwise, people would never believe it!

A GOOD 24

A good day is one in which John feels he's done something new, something different. "Igor's recent ballad of Topdek the Dwarf is a good example," he says. "I was listening to a Super Hits of the '70s CD when 'Mr. Bojangles' came on. Please don't ask me how the connection between that and epic Dwarven ballads came about. All I know is that I started giggling uncontrollably at some point."

THE STRIP THAT YOU COULD NEVER PUBLISH WAS...?

Well, there was this Unspeakable Oaf entitled "Bi-Curious George"... but all the characters in Dork Tower are basically so nice that I don't think there's ever been anything too blue or bawdy there.

—John Kovalic

PREVIEWS april

Dragon Magazine #283
Cover by Mark Zug

DESIGN YOUR OWN DEITY
By Stephen Kenson
Create them from whole cloth or mix and match with this guide to making your own D&D gods, including domains for the Greek, Norse, and Egyptian pantheons.

REALISTIC RELIGION
By John Dougal McCarty
Make your D&D religions richer and more authentic with universal archetypes.

PLAYING THE PRIESTLY PART
By James Wyatt
Your cleric doesn't have to be just the party medic.

MY CHARACTER WOULD DO THAT
By Robin D. Laws
Learn the fine art of negotiating with your DM—and with your character.

THE GARDEN OF SOULS
By Richard Lee Byers
The ghost of Shamur's cousin beckons to her, but why? New Forgotten Realms fiction by the author of *The Shattered Mask*.

Plus: "Nodwick," "Sage Advice," "The Play's the Thing," "Dork Tower," "What's New," and plenty more.

$5.99 U.S./$8.99 CAN
TSR Product No. 82283

$9.95/$14.95 CAN
WTC11838
ISBN: 0-7869-1838-1

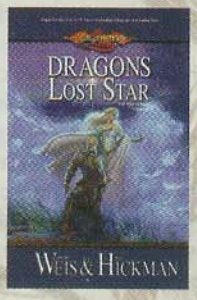
THE STANDING STONE
A D&D Adventure
by John R. Rateliff

Deep in the forest, evil awaits. A ghostly horseman terrorizies a small hamlet, and the player characters must stop him before he kills everyone. Players deal with supernatural horror as well as traditional monsters in this powerful adventure.

$6.99/$9.99 CAN
TSR21818
ISBN: 0-7869-1818-7

THE FLOODGATE
A Forgotten Realms Novel
by Elaine Cunningham

As Halruaa's orderly civilization begins to devolve toward chaos, Matteo, hero of *The Magehound,* embarks upon a quest in search of the dark truths behind the respectable society. Meanwhile, the magehound Kiva forms deadly alliances in order to exact revenge upon Matteo.



$27.95/$42.99 CAN
TSR21817
ISBN: 0-7869-1817-9

DRAGONS OF A LOST STAR
A Dragonlance Novel
by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

As the War of Souls continues, the shield over the elven kingdom of Silvanesti falls. Mina leads her forces triumphantly into that conquered nation, only to face danger from friends and foes alike. Meanwhile, Goldmoon follows the river of the dead, which threatens to engulf them all.

MAY

Defenders of the Faith	D&D Accessory	$9.95
The Inheritance	DL Novel	$6.99

JUNE

Betrayal	DL Novel	$24.95
The Shattered Mask	FR Novel	$6.99
Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting	FR Campaign	$39.95
Pool of Radiance: Attack on Myth Drannor	FR Adventure	$17.95

Kingdoms of Kalamar™
Campaign Setting **Official**
D&D® Third Edition!

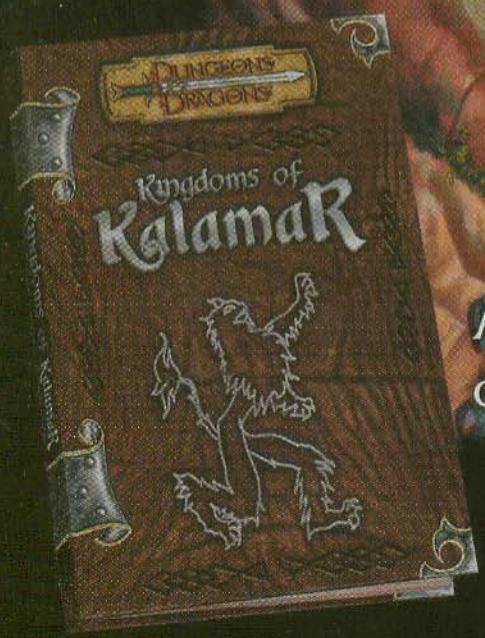
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

Enhance your love of Dungeons and Dragons®--

Discover Kalamar!

Experience fascinating cultures in a fully realized D&D World!

Spring 2001



After all- doesn't your **ass-kicking** campaign **demand** a kickass setting?

Kalamar: A world filled with powerful sorceries, strange races, clashing armies, deadly political maneuvering, chivalrous heroes, scheming villains, fantastic gods and their zealous priesthoods, ancient tongues, clandestine power groups and much, much more… Thus are the lands of Tellene. Geographic and historical research were used to create Tellene's topography, populations, armies, cities and laws. Schools of magic, priesthoods and supernatural marvels of Tellene exemplify the aura of high adventure that pervades the Kalamaran realms.

Kingdoms of Kalamar details the history of the peoples and the nations of Tellene. From the depths of the mysterious Vohven Jungle to the vast savanna of the Drhokker horse-lords, this book describes every kingdom, race and topographical feature. This new Kalamar hardcover of approximately 250-300 pages contains new material and includes a brilliantly painted map depicting the eastern and western halves of the continent. Truly a piece of art, the map has been called the finest fantasy map on the market.

d20 system

© Copyright 2000, Kenzer and Company. All Rights Reserved.
The Kingdoms of Kalamar and the Kalamar logo are trademarks of Kenzer and Company.
The D20 logo, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, and the Wizards of the Coast logo are all trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used by Kenzer & Company under license.

www.kenzerco.com

CONVENTION CALENDAR: APRIL

DAY	APRIL CONVENTIONS
Apr 13–15	**EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN 2001** Illinois Southern Illinois University, Carbondale • Contact: SIUC Strategic Games Society Office of Student Development, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425 Email: scotmkeene@aol.com Web: www.siu.edu/~gamesoc Featuring: RPGs, RPGA Living City events, board games, miniature painting competition, special guests, and an auction.
Apr 20–22	**EERIE CON** New York Days Inn River-View, Niagara Falls • Contact: W. Paul Ganley Email: wpaulg@aol.com Featuring: RPGs and an auction.
Apr 27–29	**SPRING OFFENSIVE** Illinois Illinois Central College, East Peoria • Contact: Tri-County Gaming Association • 1293 Peoria St., Washington, Il 61571 Email: thegameroom@mwonline.net Web: www.springoffensive.com Featuring: RPGs, miniature games, dealers, and concessions on site.

DAY • TIME	APRIL WEB EVENTS
Apr 3 • 5 P.M. (Pacific Time)	**RPGA TONIGHT** Robert Weise joins us to explain how gamers from all over the world create characters that move from adventure to adventure and game convention to game convention, as well as from RPGA event to RPGA event. The *Campaign Guide* details a star system in the Star Wars galaxy, complete with planet descriptions, important non-player character profiles, various interplanetary organizations to join (or fight against!), a Jedi academy, and more. So grab the guide, generate a regulation character, and join us!
Every Thursday 7 P.M. (Pacific Time)	**ROUND ROBIN TRIVIA** Get and Give Good Trivia Round Robin Trivia doesn't just demand your knowing the answers to tough roleplaying trivia, it demands you know the questions as well. Come ready to give as good as you get!
Apr 6 • 5 P.M. (Pacific Time)	**FROM THE DRAGON'S MOUTH** Humor in Gaming Is your fighter PC more likely to be named Bob than Aragorn? Or do you groan when you encounter another vorpal bunny that can only be slain with a holy hand grenade? *Dragon Magazine's* editors open the floor to what is, and isn't, good humor in gaming.
Apr 7 & Apr 21 8:55 P.M. (Pacific Time)	**TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA** Welcome D&D trivia buffs! Been playing D&D since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded!
Apr 13 • 5 P.M. (Pacific Time)	**DESIGNER'S GUILD** Star Wars: Miniatures Swing by our Wizards Presents chat room on lucky Friday, April 13, between 5 P.M. and 6 P.M., and get the most up-to-the-minute news on our line of Star Wars miniatures. Creative Director Chris Pramas joins us to update you on the new minis hitting shelves from March through June and to answer your questions about the product line.

DRAGON COMICS IN THEIR OWN COMIC BOOKS!
DORK TOWER #13
It's valentine's day in Mud Bay, and the Perky Goths are on the ascendent! But can Matt meet the Goth of his dreams? And what's his ex-girlfriend doing in town? Starring Gilly, the Perky Goth.
Plus: CLANBOOK: PERKY, a VERY unofficial supplement to Vampire: The Masquerade, by Phil Masters! And as usual, there's Murphy's Rules, Wild Life, and a ton of other cool backups! Coming in January!
NODWICK #7
Our heroes venture into a forboding tower to retrieve an ancient artifact of unimaginable power... I think. What good is a magical pillow? Why does Nodwick start dreaming about faries? What does this have to do with a long-vanished evil God who is destined to destroy the world? Find out in this special 30-page story!
DORK TOWER
LOVE IS ALL AROUND
Nodwick
www.dorkstorm.com
Pick up a Dork Storm comic book every month!
MAKE SURE THAT YOUR GAME OR COMIC RETAILER CARRIES YOUR FAVORITE TITLES FROM DORK STORM PRESS!
DORK STORM

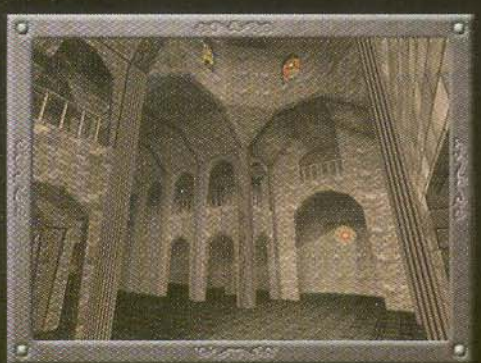
cyber warrior

Rubies of Eventide

"The strands of fate are held in mortal hands. Only they can rise above the demands of destiny." ~ Praxus

- Unique Combat System
- Seven Races, Sixteen Classes
- Immersive History and Culture
- Dozens of Skills, Hundreds of Spells
- Roleplaying is Encouraged and Rewarded
- Open Skill System Allows Unique Characters

1-800-playcwi
www.rubiesofeventide.com



countdown to the forgotten Realms

MAGIC of FAERÛN

If there's one thing for which the FORGOTTEN REALMS is known, it's magic. This is the world that introduced spellfire, wild magic, and the Weave, after all. With the new edition arriving in June, the land of Faerûn will once again redefine magic in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.

THE SOURCE OF MAGIC

The conduit between spellcasters and raw magic is the goddess Mystra. Her "body" is a force known as the **Weave**, and it is through this medium that both the **Art** (arcane magic) and **Power** (divine magic) are manifested from the essence of raw magic. Spellcasters know the secrets of making the threads of the weave twist and reshape to their will. When those threads are torn or frayed, **wild magic** is the result. Spellcasters daring to employ their Art or Power within such damaged areas of the Weave can never be certain of the result. In some places, the Weave is torn completely away, leaving a **dead magic** zone, in which no magic can function.

The raw energy of the Weave is known as **spellfire**. Mystra grants its use in two forms: the revitalizing **silver fire** wielded by her Chosen, and the pure spellfire mastered by only a handful of mortals in each generation.

SECRET LORE

Magic remains mysterious in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and few know about the **Shadow Weave**, those negative spaces between the threads of Mystra's Weave. Shadow Weave spellcasters can perform magic normally in a dead or wild magic zone, but they lose their ability to affect the natural Weave as they gain power.

High elven magic was created before the Weave took on its present form, and its practitioners exceeded the powers of contemporary spellcasters. Dwarves and giants created **rune magic** for use with divine spells. The witches of Rashemen and the Red Wizards of Thay use a form of cooperative magic involving multiple casters in **circle magic.**

Faerûn is a big place, and Toril is bigger still. Fortunately, previous cultures have left plenty of **portals** throughout the land. Portals are basically permanent teleportation sites, though the secrets of their operation are crucial to those who would depend on their use. To someone without the right key, a portal might be just a big rock in the middle of a field.

SPELLS AND MORE

From *Aganazzar's scorcher* to *waterspout*, the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting adds more than three dozen spells to the D&D game. In addition, the book includes new rules on spellbook and scroll creation. If that's not enough to satisfy your craving for all things magical, then wait another month or two for *Magic of Faerûn*, which provides even more magical goodness for wielders of the Art and the Power in the FORGOTTEN REALMS.

The new setting is only two months away! Join us next month for a quick tour of the new face of Faerûn, then return in June for the 25th Anniversary issue of *DRAGON Magazine* and not one but two new monthly FORGOTTEN REALMS features.

Here's one of the many new spells from the upcoming FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting:

EAGLE'S SPLENDOR

Transmutation

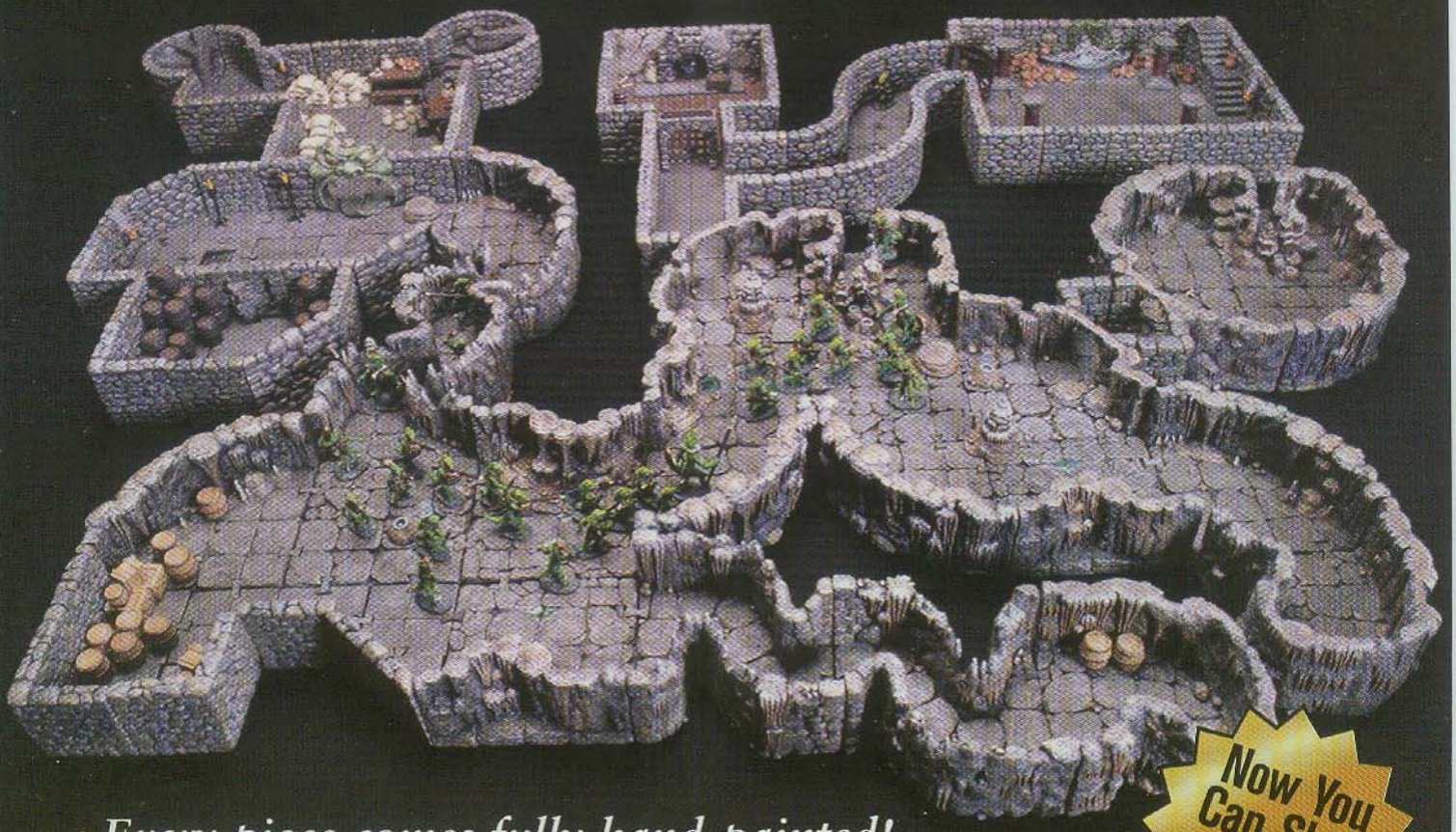
Level:	Brd 2, Hrp 2 Sor/Wiz 2 Trade 3
Components:	V, S, M/DF
Casting Time:	1 action
Range:	Touch
Target:	Creature touched
Duration:	1 hour/level
Saving Throw:	None
Spell Resistance:	Yes

The transmuted creature becomes more poised, articulate, and personally forceful. The spell grants an enhancement bonus to Charisma of 1d4+1 points, adding the usual benefits to Charisma-based skills. Sorcerers and bards who receive *eagle's splendor* do not gain extra spells, but the save DCs for their spells increase.

Arcane Material Component:
A drop of honey or henna.

For more information on the new FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms

Add New Dimension To Your Campaign



Now You Can Shop Online! dwarvenforge.com

- *Every piece comes fully hand-painted!*
- *Amazingly detailed and cast in durable resin!*
- *Huge variety of sets and accessories to choose from!*

MasterMaze™ is an interlocking, interchangeable dungeon system meticulously sculpted, cast in durable resin, and then painted by skilled artisans. No other company offers such magnificent accessories for 25-28mm miniature gaming ready to use right out of the box. Dwarven Forge has expanded its extensive product line again to bring you the cavern set, dungeon accessories, medieval furniture, narrow passages and, the first of its miniatures series, lizardmen! Everything comes fully hand-painted so you can spend more time gaming.

To see the complete Dwarven Forge catalog and place orders, visit us at: www.dwarvenforge.com

MasterMaze™

The Ultimate 3-D Dungeon System for Miniatures

The savage Lizardman Tribe launch our figure line (top) and the Narrow Passage Set adds great new tactical possibilities.

UP ON A SOAPBOX

by Gary Gygax

what the heck is a roleplaying game?! PART 4

So far we have covered the first half of the sixteen elements—building, business, character development, combat, economics, exploration, intrigue, and politics. By now, readers should have a fair handle on why the factors listed were included as vital elements of the roleplaying game form. Some are more "playable" than others, but without each the game isn't complete. That said, let's cover the next set of elements.

Problem Solving

That we do not always know the answer to anything, especially at first glance, is plainly evident. This element is not so much rules-based as it is necessary to enjoyable play. The appeal of murder mysteries and similar works of fiction centers around the matter of problem solving. The same is true, to some extent, in every form of the roleplaying game. All respondents seem to have a solid grasp of the value of this element, its current rating being a 7.5 out of 9.

Questing

Here again we have a heroic tale consideration that needs little explanation or justification for being stated as vital to the game form. It is another play-oriented consideration that need not be centered on the mechanics of the game. Whether the quest is of a minor sort or a monumental one upon which the fate of the whole world hinges, the quest plays a principal and general part in the play of the roleplaying game. The current rating for questing is a solid 7.3.

Random Chance

In a game without set parameters, like those of chess, for example, it is necessary to have systems for random determination of all manner of things. In the simple boardgame, dice are typically used to govern movement. A roleplaying game, where all manner of unforeseen events might occur, needs a way to manage these various probabilities by some random chance determination.

Dice are the answer, with tables and rules to govern their results. Random chance happenings occur in real life—weather, who we meet, accidents, lucky breaks, and so on. In the heroic and danger-heightened roleplaying game, how much more important is such a factor?

Similarly, how else to discover the probability of some action not actually carried out in reality? For instance, you are teeing off, about to strike a golf ball down the fairway. The result can't be predicted, but given statistics on your usual golf game, a table with the possible results can be devised, and the most likely results given the greatest weight. This same principle applies to the player's game persona even though all of the "statistics" are imaginary.

Not to have random chance govern the character's actions is to have a game persona that is little more than a puppet. Dice results allow participants to understand what random chance actually represents: self-volition. The current rating is at a fairly strong 6.8.

Role Assumption

This is an element that almost everybody seems to understand well. What is the point of playing a roleplaying game if the participant does not relate to the character she is taking on? Not only does failure to assume the role obviate the purpose of the game but also that neglect tends to spoil the play for the other participants. Staying in character can be difficult, and it is sometimes demanding—especially when using actual knowledge possessed in real life would be of great benefit to the game personae. Rules for this are difficult to write, and the best that can be done is likely to stress the need as I have done here. It is something that is learned through playing the game. Respondents to the survey rate role assumption very highly at 7.6.

Next month, we will address the final four elements of roleplaying games. These are especially interesting parts of the game form—roleplaying, story, strategy, and theatrics. I have a lot to say about each, and I hope you'll be there to read the commentary and note a surprise or two in the ratings.

SEEKING OUT-OF-PRINT TITLES?
NEED THE NEW STUFF TOO?

D&D® 3RD EDITION
d20
AD&D® 2ND EDITION
AD&D® 1ST EDITION
BASIC D&D®

25 YEARS OF TSR... the hit pointe ALL IN ONE SPOT

http://www.hitpointe.com

Mail-order Game Shop
Specializing in Used and Out-of-Print
D&D®, AD&D® and
White Wolf's World of Darkness®
game products.

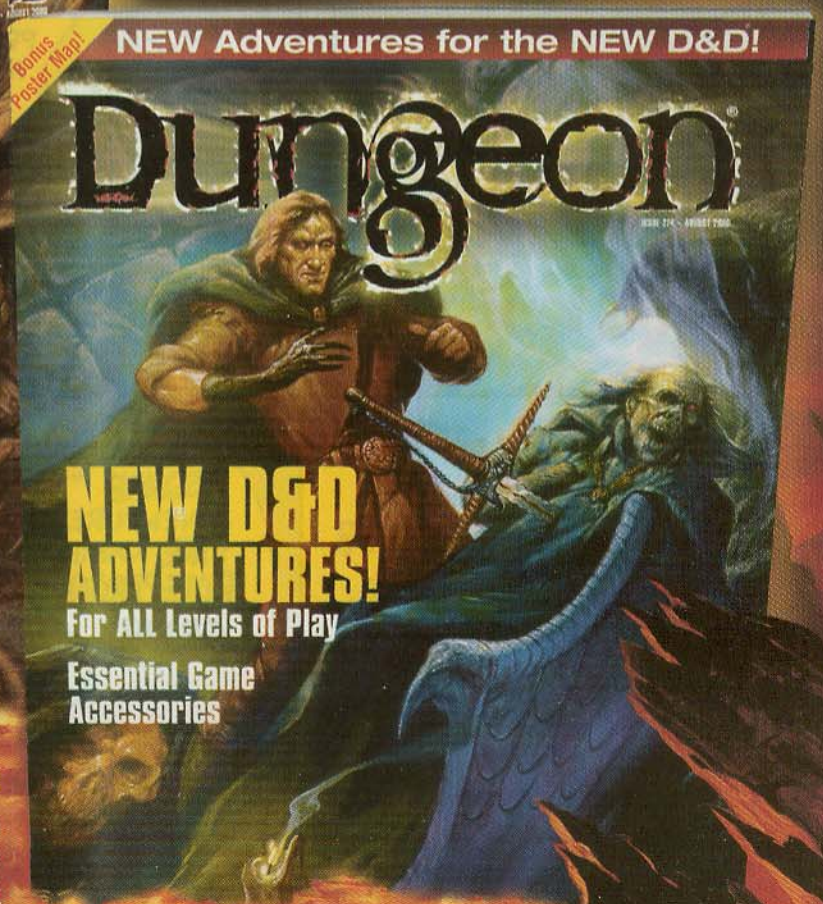
No computer? Write for current price list:

540 North Lapeer Road, Suite 255
Orion Township, MI 48362

Give Your Game The Edge

With the Official Dungeons & Dragons Magazines!

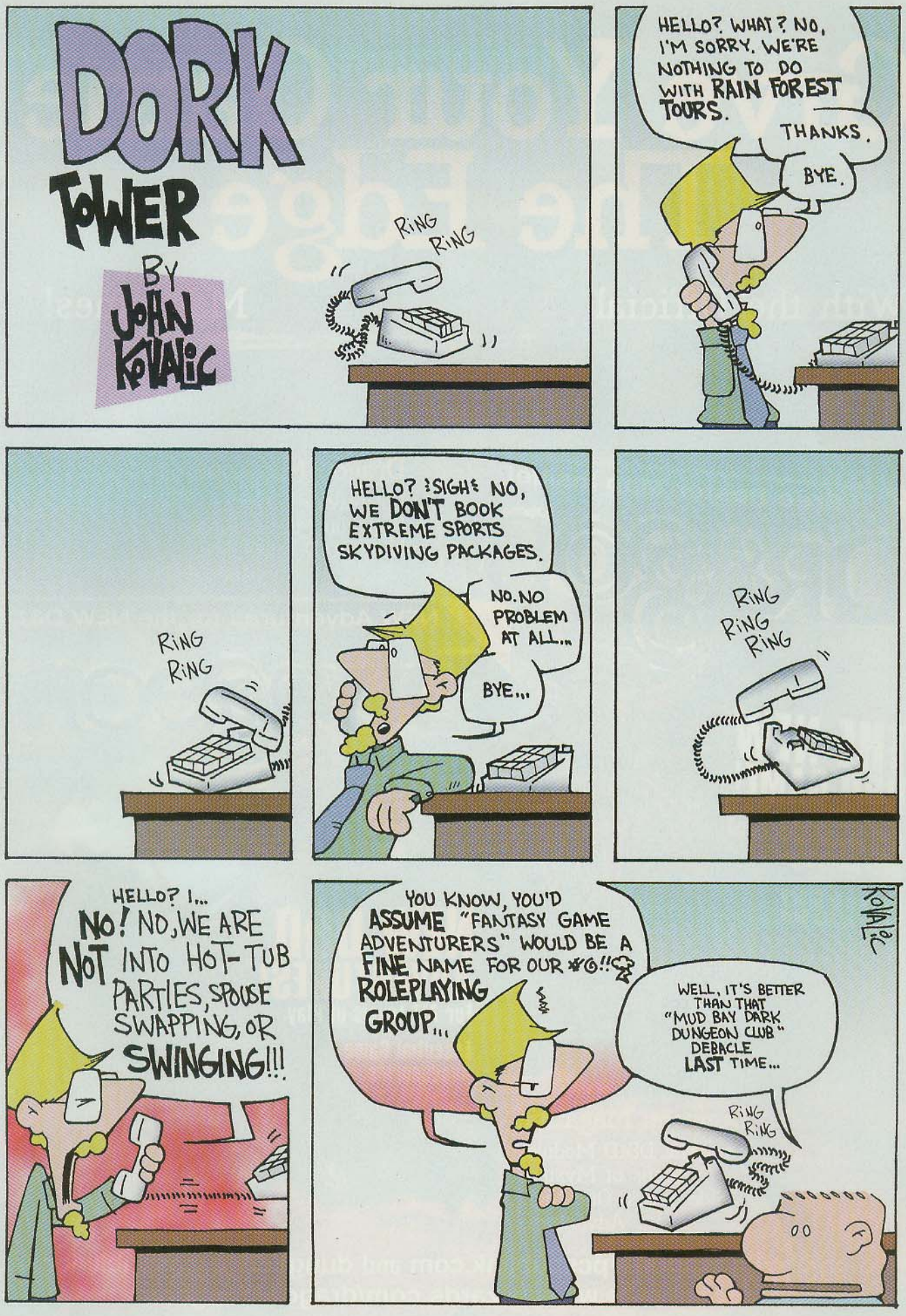
Dragon Magazine
Roleplaying Strategy
Dungeon Master Advice
New D&D Rules



Dungeon Magazine
Fantastic D&D Modules
Maps of Mystery
Side Treks—One-Night Adventures

1-800-395-7760 dragon@pcsbublink.com and dungeon @ pcspublink.com
order online at www.wizards.com/dragon/dungeon

Dragon, Dungeon, Dungeons & Dragons, and D&D are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast. © 2000 Wizards of the Coast


DORK TOWER
By JOHN KOVALIC
RING RING
HELLO? WHAT? NO, I'M SORRY. WE'RE NOTHING TO DO WITH RAIN FOREST TOURS.
THANKS.
BYE.
RING RING
HELLO? :SIGH: NO, WE DON'T BOOK EXTREME SPORTS SKYDIVING PACKAGES.
NO. NO PROBLEM AT ALL...
BYE...
RING RING RING
HELLO? I... NO! NO, WE ARE NOT INTO HOT-TUB PARTIES, SPOUSE SWAPPING, OR SWINGING!!!
YOU KNOW, YOU'D ASSUME "FANTASY GAME ADVENTURERS" WOULD BE A FINE NAME FOR OUR #6!! ROLEPLAYING GROUP...
WELL, IT'S BETTER THAN THAT "MUD BAY DARK DUNGEON CLUB" DEBACLE LAST TIME...
RING RING
KOVALIC

Please Visit These Fine Retailers To Find Our New Releases!

AL - Wyvern Games LLC - 698 Commerce Ct, Ste A
Prattville, AL. 36066 - Fax (334) 358-2422 - **Vox (334) 358-2422**

AZ - Game Depot - 707 A South Forest Ave
Tempe, AZ 85281 -"Arizona's Best Game Store" - **(480) 966-4727**

CA - The War House - 630 West Willow Street
Long Beach, CA 90806 - Warhouse.hypermart.net - **(562) 424-3180**

CA - Adventurer's Guild of Riverside - 3320 Mary Street
Riverside, CA 92506 - (909) 682-0750 Fax - **(909) 682-1199 Vox**

CO - Attactix - 15107 E. Hampden
Aurora, CO 80014 - Attactix.com - **(303) 699-3349**

CO - Collector Mania - 17892 Cottonwood
Parker, CO 80134 - Collectormaniacs.com - **(303) 766-3530**

CT - Cave Comics - 57 Church Hill Road
Newtown, CT 06470 - Cavecomics.com - **(203) 426-4346**

FL - Book and Game Emporium - 311 NW Racetrack Rd.
Ft. Walton Beach, FL. 32547 - **(850) 863-7964**

FL - War Dogs Game Center - 2580 Atlantic Blvd.
Jacksonville, FL 32207 - **(904) 399-1975**

GA - The War Room - 2055 F Beaver Run Rd
Norcross, GA 30093 - Thewarroom.com - **(770) 729-9588**

GA - The Dragons Horde - 25563 Memorial Drive
Stone Mountain, GA 30083 - Thedragonshorde.com - **(404) 298-1188**

IA - Acme Comics and Collectibles, Inc. - 1622 Pierce Street
Sioux City, IA 51105 - Acmefirst.com - **(712) 258-6171**

ID - Dark Horse Games - 2226 Main Street
Boise, ID 83702 - **(800) 953-5620**

IL - Dragon's Sanctum - 3213 23rd Avenue
Moline, IL 61265 - (309) 762-8692 Fax **(309) 762-5577 Vox**

IL - Be a Gamer - 741 South Route 31
West Dundee, IL 60118 - Beagamer.com - **(847) 844-7499**

KY - Rusty Scabbard - 820 Lane Allen Rd. # 12
Lexington, KY 40504 - Rustyscabbard.com - **(606) 278-6634**

KS - Table Top Game & Hobby - 7797 Quivera Road
Lenexa, KS 40504 - (913) 962-Gama Fax - **(913) 962-4263 Vox**

LA - Little Wars - 3036 College Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808 - Littlewars.com - **(504) 926-4556**

MA - Grandmaster Games - 31 Faunce Corner Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747 - Grandmastergames.com - **(508) 994-5474**

MI - Discount Hobby - 35700 Beckley Road # E-20C
Battlecreek, MI 49015 - Discounthobby.com - **(616) 979-2262**

MI - Old Guard Hobbies - 35806 Van Dyke
Sterling Heights, MI 48312 **(810) 977-3969**

MO - Changing Hands Book Shop - 528 S. Virginia Ave
Joplin, MO. 64801 - Greyfox@ipa.net - **(417) 623-6699**

MO - Hobby Shop - 5840 Hampton
St. Louis, MO. 63109 - **(314) 351-4818**

MO - Gamer's Den - 550 East 5th Street
Washington, MO 63090 - Gramersdenonline.com - **(636) 239-4429**

NJ - Gamer's Realm - 202 Route 130 North -
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077 - Gamersrealm.com - **(609) 677-9088**

NJ - Jester's Playhouse - 2408 New Road
Northfield, NJ 08225 - Jestersplayhouse.com - **(609) 677-9088**

NJ - Gamers Realm - 2025 Old Trenton Rd -
West Windsor, NJ 08550 - Gamersrealm.com - **(609) 426-9339**

NM - Active Imagination - 11200 Montgomery # 10
Albuquerque, NM 87111 - **(505) 346-2232**

NY - Fantastic Planet - 24 Oak St
Plattsburgh, NY 12901 - **(518) 563-2946**

NY - The Dragons's Den - 52600 Sout Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 - edragonsden.com - **(845) 471-1404**

OH - Wolf's Lair Games - 33 E High St -
Springfield, OH 45502 - Wolfslairgames.com - **(888) 333-WOLF**

OK - Rip Tides - 2200 North Main
Altus, OK 73521 - **(580) 477-4173**

OK - The Original Game Shop - 6524 E 51st St - In the Farm
Tulsa, OK 74145 - **(888) 525-8647**

OK - Top Deck Games - 5970-K East 31st Street - Mall 31
Tulsa, OK 74145 - Topdeck.com - **(918) 665-7529**

PA - Excalibur Games & Collectibles - 227 East Street
Dunmore, PA 18512 - Excaliburgnc@aol.com - **(570) 341-8774**

PA - Gateway Sportscards Comics & Games - 833 W. 38th Street
Erie, PA 16508 - gatewaycardsandcomics.com - **(814) 864-3772**

PA - Comic Store West - Maple-Village II, 984 Loucks Road
York, PA 17404 - **(717) 845-9198**

PA - Pastimes - 1 East Main - Pastimes1@aol.com
Palmyra, PA 17078 - (888) 260-9502 - **(717) 838-9502**

TX - Texas Game Company - 803 East Main Street
Allen, TX 75002 - **(972) 390-9467**

TX - Dragons Lair Comics - 4910 Burnett Road
Austin, TX 78756 - **(512) 454-2399**

TX - King's Hobby - 8810 N Lamar
Austin, TX 78753 - Kingshobby.com - **(512) 836-7388**

TX - Fantasy and Sci-Fi Games - 2220 Marsh Lane # 107
Carrollton, TX 75006 - **(972) 418-5409**

TX - Dibble's Hobbies - 1029 Donaldson Ave
San Antonio, TX 78228 - Dibbles@satx.net - **(210) 735-7721**

UT - Dragons Keep - 131 North University
Provo, UT 84601 - Dragonskeep.com - **(801) 373-3482**

UT - B C Games - 958 West Colmar Ave, 1860 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84104 - Bcgames.com - **(801) 886-1888**

VA - Little Wars - 11213 C Lee Hwy
Fairfax, VA 22030 - Fabet@aol.com - **(703) 352-9222**

VA - Hobbies - 2342 Plank Road - Hobbiesontheweb.com
Fredericksburg, VA 22401 - **(540) 372-6578**

VA - Caught You Looking! - 817 South Mill, B-103
Your store here! VA. 24019 - **(972) 434-3088**

VA - Ground Zero - 55524-4 Williamson Road
Roanoke, VA. 24012 - **(540) 777-4856**

VA - Caught You Looking! - 817 South Mill, B-103
Your store here! VA. 24019 - **(972) 434-3088**

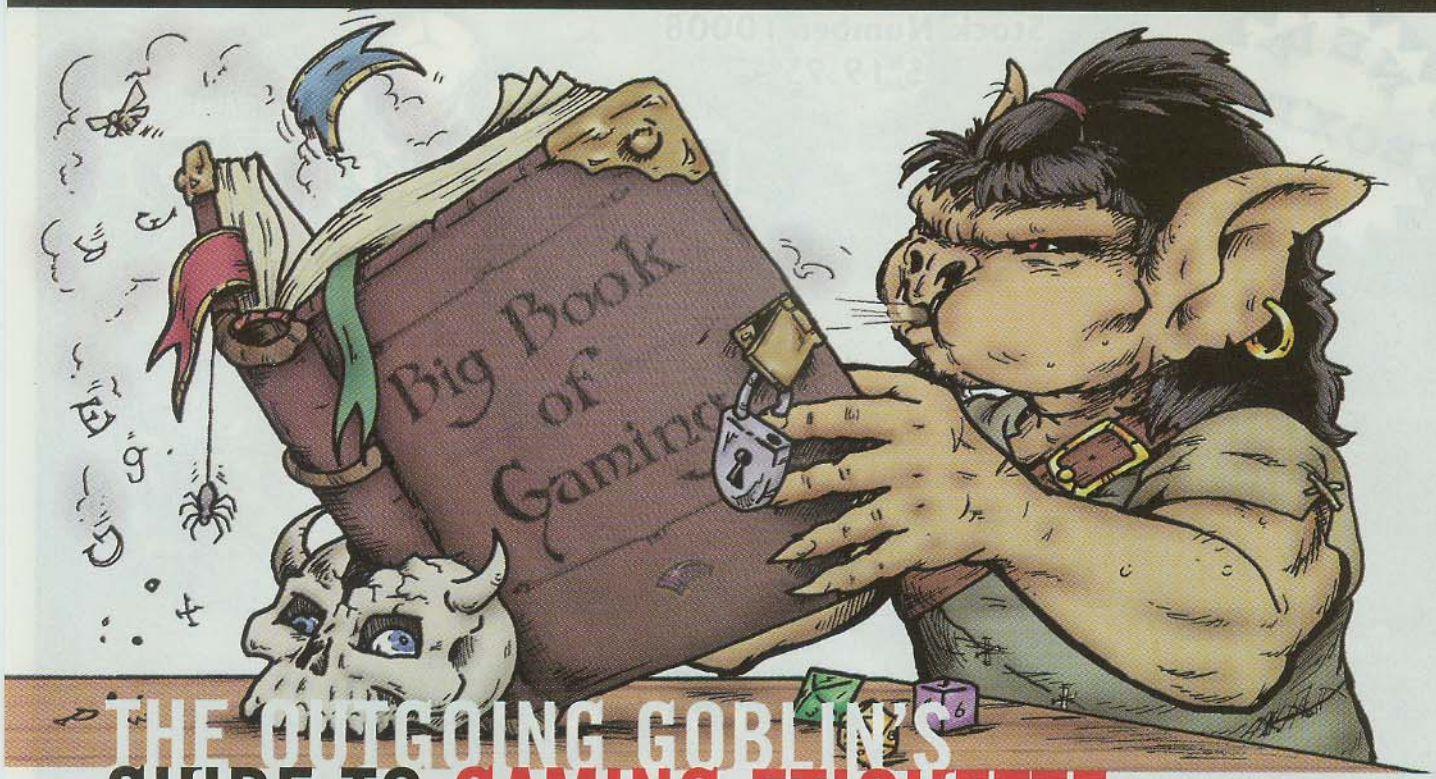
WI - Chimera Hobby Shop - 425 West College Avenue
Appleton, WI 54911 - Chimerahobby.com **(920) 735-1201**

WI - Chimera Hobby Shop - 8347 West Division Street
Fond Du Lac, WI 54935 - Chimerahobby.com **(920) 922-8338**

Canada

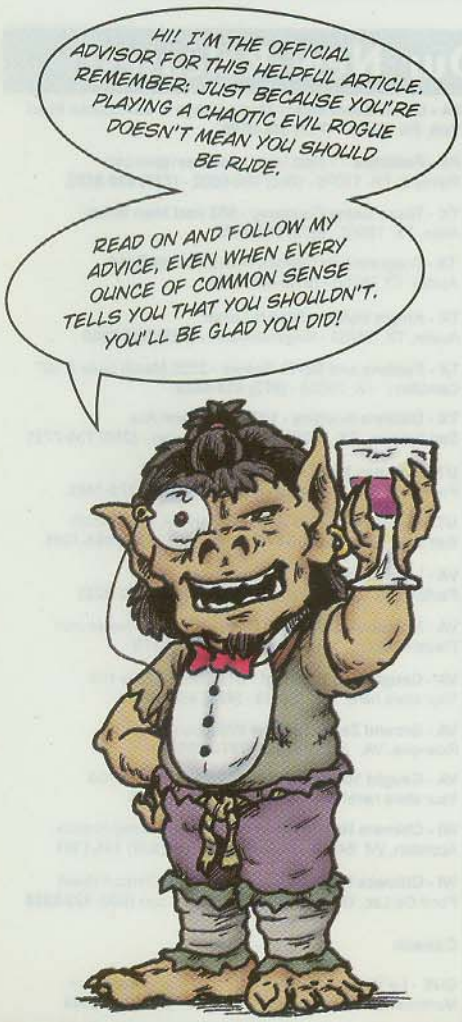
QUE - Le Valet D'Coeur - 4408 St-Denis - Levalet.com
Montreal, Quebec, H2J 2L1 - Canada - **(888) 499-5389**

FOR A FREE CATALOG CALL (972) 434-3088 - WWW.REAPERMINI.COM



THE OUTGOING GOBLIN'S GUIDE TO GAMING ETIQUETTE

by Jeff Vogel • illustrated by Aaron Williams


HI! I'M THE OFFICIAL ADVISOR FOR THIS HELPFUL ARTICLE. REMEMBER: JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE PLAYING A CHAOTIC EVIL ROGUE DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD BE RUDE.
READ ON AND FOLLOW MY ADVICE, EVEN WHEN EVERY OUNCE OF COMMON SENSE TELLS YOU THAT YOU SHOULDN'T. YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID!

Etiquette is the art and science of living together happily. It is the set of rules that maintains the peacefulness of civilization. It is the salve that soothes society when it becomes chafed.

Have you ever been in the middle of a long, happy session of D&D, when suddenly you said the wrong thing, and your whole party suddenly ganged up on you and killed you? Wow! Me, too.

Fortunately, I've learned from all the times this has happened to me. This guide is a way of giving something back to the community from which I have taken so much. Follow the advice within, and you will shine as a beacon of politeness to all your fellow patrons of the geekly arts.

Dos and Don'ts of the Proper Roleplayer

It is a terrifying thing to be an adventurer—you're massively outnumbered by monsters, surrounded by huge forces you can't understand, and trying to keep your dice from mingling overmuch with the dice of the player next to you. Face it: You're toast. But if you follow these rules, you might be able to hold off your inevitable, grisly death for a short period of time.

DON'T stand up, point at the DM, and shout "You're not the boss of me!"

DO regale your friends with tales of roleplaying adventure. What's the point of having Frodalf make 3rd level if you can't tell your pals about it in intense, soul-crushing detail?

DON'T ask the magic user how much mana is left in his pool.

DO give your characters classic fantasy names to help get people in the proper mood. "Bilbo" and "Mel Gibson" are excellent choices.

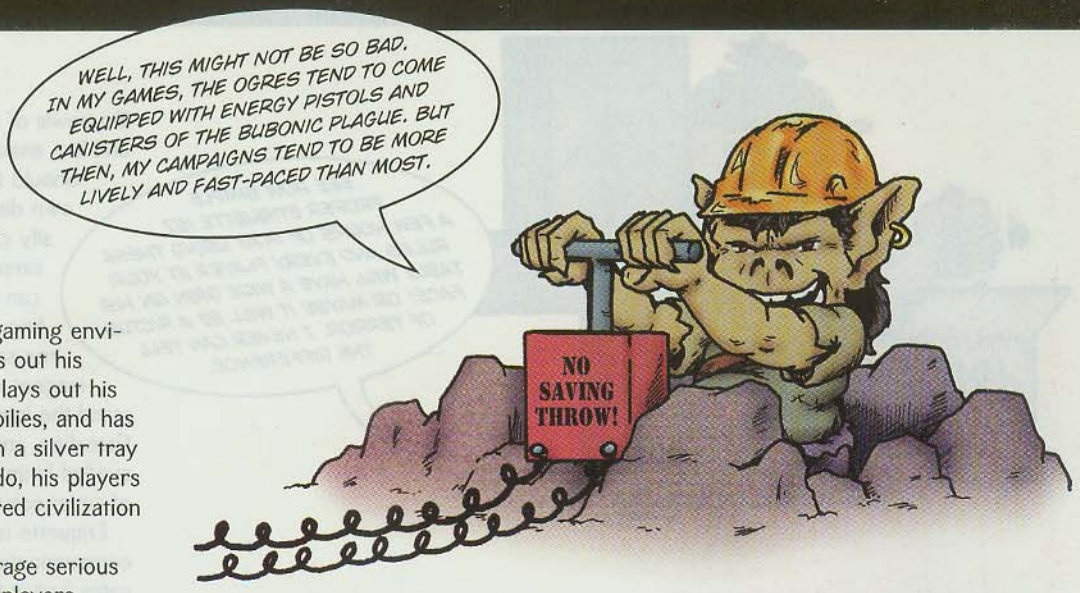
DON'T blow cigarette smoke in the DM's face after casting a *fireball*, no matter how much it helps him to "feel the fantasy."

DO adopt a special voice to use when your character speaks. Your fellow players will feel much more immersed in the fantasy after thirty minutes in a room with "Squeeky, The Gnome With a High-Pitched Voice."

DON'T try to get an automatic rifle for your character. The DM will be forced to give the orcs rocket launchers in the name of game balance.

Good manners are, of course, not for the player alone. Believe it or not, sometimes the Dungeon Master should

play nice too. Not too much, of course, or the players will take advantage—shifty vermin that they are. Never trust them for a moment.


WELL, THIS MIGHT NOT BE SO BAD. IN MY GAMES, THE OGRES TEND TO COME EQUIPPED WITH ENERGY PISTOLS AND CANISTERS OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE. BUT THEN, MY CAMPAIGNS TEND TO BE MORE LIVELY AND FAST-PACED THAN MOST.
NO SAVING THROW!

DO provide a civilized gaming environment. When a DM pulls out his ermine-trimmed dice bag, lays out his hand-crocheted gaming doilies, and has the module brought out on a silver tray by his man-servant Orlando, his players know that they have entered civilization at last.

DON'T forget to encourage serious thought. Try making your players answer a riddle before they can leave the dungeon. Nothing builds a player's self-esteem like coming up with the answer after 3 hours of saying things like, "Is it the sun? No? Then how about a snail?"

DO encourage roleplaying by enforcing an "If you say it, your character says it!" rule. It's common sense. After all, in the middle of a dungeon, do you really want your elf to say, "Hey, Jason, get me a coke?" or, "Arrgh. My chest. Aaaghh! Where are my nitroglycerine pills?" Certainly not.

DON'T break with tradition. The bad guy always puts a death trap on his dresser. Monsters always live underground, even though it would be really moldy and cold. And intelligent magic swords always have really obnoxious personalities.

DO make fantasy speech mandatory. Common use of phrases like "Prithee, my liege" and "Huzzah!" create an environment that makes the players feel blissfully adrift in time and space.

(Example: "Prithee my liege, but if mine *+1 dagger* doesn't end up back in my pack on the nonce, I will have to kick some serious elven butt. Huzzah!")

DON'T give the ogres canisters of the bubonic plague until a character in the party can cast *remove disease*. Fair is fair.

Follow the Standard Rules of Etiquette

When we spend a happy evening gaming, we create a fantastic new world in our caffeine-addled minds. However, our corporeal bodies, sadly, remain in this world, growing older and rounder. This means that, since we remain in this world, we have to live by the rules of etiquette everyone else lives by every day.

Your mother was right. "Please" and "thank you" are magic words, just as capable of opening doors as any magic spell. There are lots of other magic words, too, like "critical hit," "I'm bleeding to death," and "Huzzah!" These are phrases that make every gaming session run a little smoother.

When your host has you over for a gaming session, be a gracious guest. Compliment his collection of *Star Trek* novels. Don't spill Mountain Dew on the *Highlander* video tapes. Don't point out how lame he was for buying a Dreamcast when the Playstation II has been out for months and it doubles as a DVD player. Instead, compliment his taste in furniture and wall decoration, and, if he has crusty dishes stacked in the sink, just think of them as his effort to create a dungeon-like atmosphere.

A polite guest always brings tasty snacks to be consumed during the gaming session. In general, gamers insist on food that is low-calorie, nutritious, and pleasingly high in roughage. Bottled mineral water and rice cakes are a must, and no gamer can resist a nice bowl of carrot sticks.

When rolling dice, shake them briefly and release them with a smooth, gentle motion. Avoid an unpleasant rattling sound, which might disturb your DM and result in frequent critical hits landed on your character. Remember: Your dice are there to generate random numbers. They are not meant to serve as projectiles, earplugs, or candy.

When your favorite character is killed, do not simply wad up the character sheet and throw it on the ground. Proper etiquette demands that you must first tear it into quarters, using firm, horizontal hand motions, and place the remains into an envelope made of fine linen paper. Finally, either burn the envelope or put it through a shredder and use the remains as hamster bedding—or eat it.

Also, when your favorite character is killed, a half an hour of shouted obscenities is strictly optional.

SEE HOW SIMPLE PROPER ETIQUETTE IS? A FEW HOURS OF PLAY USING THESE RULES AND EVERY PLAYER AT YOUR TABLE WILL HAVE A WIDE GRIN ON HIS FACE! OR MAYBE IT WILL BE A RICTUS OF TERROR. I NEVER CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE.
d20's
NUMBERED 1 THROUGH 1
Death Certificates

Finally, after a good session of gaming, one should always send a proper thank you note to the DM, hand-written on some sort of lovely stationary:

> Dear Mr. Dungeon Master,
>
> Thank you very much for having us over for that lovely adventure last Saturday. Also, thank you very much for the lovely *+1 longsword*. It was exactly what my character needed, and the experience points I received for getting it really hit the spot. Ha ha.
>
> Also, I'd like to apologize for that little misunderstanding that we had. I was mistaken. You are, in fact, the boss of me. I'm sorry for any upset my loud and unexpected outburst caused you.
>
> - Warmest Regards,
> Jeff Vogel

Building an Interesting Party

When creating your character, remember that the central element of every great drama is conflict. Help out your DM by making things interesting! Does your friend plan to play a shifty, untrustworthy thief? Then you must play a paladin. Is Erik playing a laser-gun-toting alien hunter? Then be an alien in human disguise, and lay your eggs in his torso as soon as possible. Is the DM's girlfriend in the game? Then do something to tick her off, by all means!

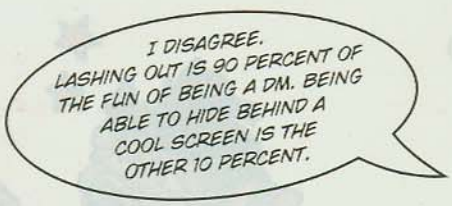
There is no better time for exciting roleplaying and intrigue than when splitting up the loot. Look at it this way: Think about how important it is to get paid at your job. Think of the loot as your character's salary. Imagine working hard at, say, McDonalds, cleaning the grease traps and mopping the floors and waiting for the end of the month when you will finally get that *girdle of hill giant strength* you've been busting your butt for. But then, when the time comes, the shift manager tries to stick you with a lousy *+1 guisarme* instead, and you're not even proficient in the guisarme!

Remember that part of etiquette is making sure people are polite to you. So in this case, be sure to demonstrate exactly where the shift manager can put his lousy guisarme.

Pay Attention

There is nothing more irritating to a hard-working DM than inattentive players. If you peer out from over your screen and see Frederick knitting, Mariann sticking a cartridge into her Gameboy, and Jules slowly and lovingly caressing his Magic cards, you know that this evening of roleplaying is pretty much blown.

It is, of course, impolite to be inattentive during your DM's game. But it is also impolite for the DM to lash out in return, inflicting arbitrary critical hits and making rolls on a previously unused Spontaneous Wand Explosion Table.



Instead, the Dungeon Master should have foreseen potential problems and created a distraction-free gaming zone. The play room should be stripped of unpleasant distractions, like televisions and stereos. Instead, the room should be filled with items that create an atmosphere helpful to fantasy and imagination, like bowls of organ meat, open flames, and live snakes.

Should the players provide their own distractions, the DM can usually convey disapproval with simple, clear communication. A can of spray paint will let Jules know that his Magic cards are not safe at the table, a large magnet will help Mariann understand the inappropriateness of her Gameboy, and Frederick can be dissuaded from knitting with a massive box of ravenous moths.

Etiquette is, in the end, all about communication, and nothing communicates better than actions—unexpected, horrible actions.

The Importance of Timeliness and Understanding

It is a sad fact of our roleplaying lives that most campaigns are killed by indifference.

WELL, ACTUALLY, MOST OF MY CAMPAIGNS ARE KILLED BY A NATURAL 20, AN ORC, AND A ROCKET LAUNCHER. BUT, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, MY CAMPAIGNS ARE A BIT MORE LIVELY AND HIGH-SPIRITED THAN MOST.

People don't show up to sessions. The DM becomes unavailable because of a new job or an unsympathetic spouse. Or maybe all of the rulebooks are burned for warmth. Hard work and concentration are necessary to maintain a good campaign.

If you are the DM, it is important to be flexible when players are absent. If Sue can't make it, let another player play Sue's character. Give that player one of Sue's magic items as a gratuity for the extra work. You can also run Sue's character as an NPC. Playing Sue yourself will give you a chance to humorously satirize some of Sue's more notable personality traits and verbal tics. This will help you work out frustration over the time Sue spilled Mountain Dew on your *Highlander* tapes.

If you are a player, on the other hand, try to meet the DM half-way. Suppose the DM walks in carrying a copy of the module *Scum Orcs of the Hills*. He sets out twenty carefully painted scum orc miniatures and his copy of "Ecology of the Scum Orc." For the sake of realism, he has carefully cultivated a personal scent very similar to that of a scum orc. He lays out a map of the hills surrounding the players' village and asks, "What do you do now?"

This is *not* the point where you say, "We go to the lowlands and hunt kobolds." unless you want the DM to start playtesting that groovy new critical hit chart he just made up.

A Helpful Example

In closing, here is a transcript of a recent gaming sessions with the author and four of his friends. It was a pleasant experience for all concerned, and everyone was so polite that yours truly could barely stand it. Read, and learn.

The group for this session consisted of Sue (chaotic-evil rogue), Frederick (chaotic-evil rogue), Mariann (lawful-good paladin), and Jules (chaotic-evil fighter/rogue).

(Note that this is a near-perfect group for the creation of exciting role-playing. A group like this can have hours of enjoyable treachery and intrigue over the discovery of a single healing potion.)

ANY CAMPAIGN IN WHICH THE DM'S GIRLFRIEND PLAYS IS DESTINED TO BE RICH, EXCITING, AND COMPLICATED. ESPECIALLY AFTER THEY BREAK UP.

DM: Okay, the gnoll is dead. Unfortunately, your attacks damaged its kevlar vest too much for it to be of use.

Sue: We head west.

(The DM bends down behind his screen to see what comes next. As he looks, someone slaps it with the palm of his or her hand, smacking the DM in the nose. He jumps up.)

DM: Who did that?

Frederick: (pointing at Mariann) It was her!

Mariann: You sneak!

Jules: Huzzah!

DM: Okay, Frederick. You get 500 experience for helping.

(Always be polite and reward people who help you.)

Jules: Prithee, my liege!

Mariann: (to Frederick) I'll get you for this.

DM: And Mariann, you lose your paladinhood.

Mariann: Okay, I become a chaotic-evil rogue.

DM: Excellent! Done.

Sue: Where did all of these moths come from?

DM: Just being prepared.

Sue: Like I said, we head west.

Mariann: I sneak attack Jules.

(All right! Now we're getting some interesting conflict! Now none of the players will find out that I forgot to design an adventure.)

Jules: Ow. Dang. I drink my healing potion.

DM: You look in your pouch and realize that it's gone.

Jules: All right, who has my healing potion?

Mariann: I run behind Jules and sneak attack her again.

(And so on. This goes on for about an hour of pure, scheming fun.)

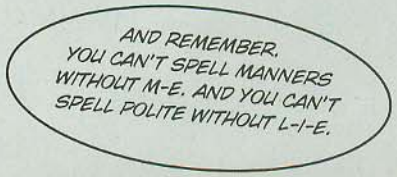
DM: (munching on a carrot stick) Suddenly, you are distracted by an explosion. You look up and see a dozen scum orcs on the crest of a nearby hill. One has a rocket launcher, and the rest are holding small metal canisters of some sort.

Sue: I pull out my wand and shoot a magic missile at them.

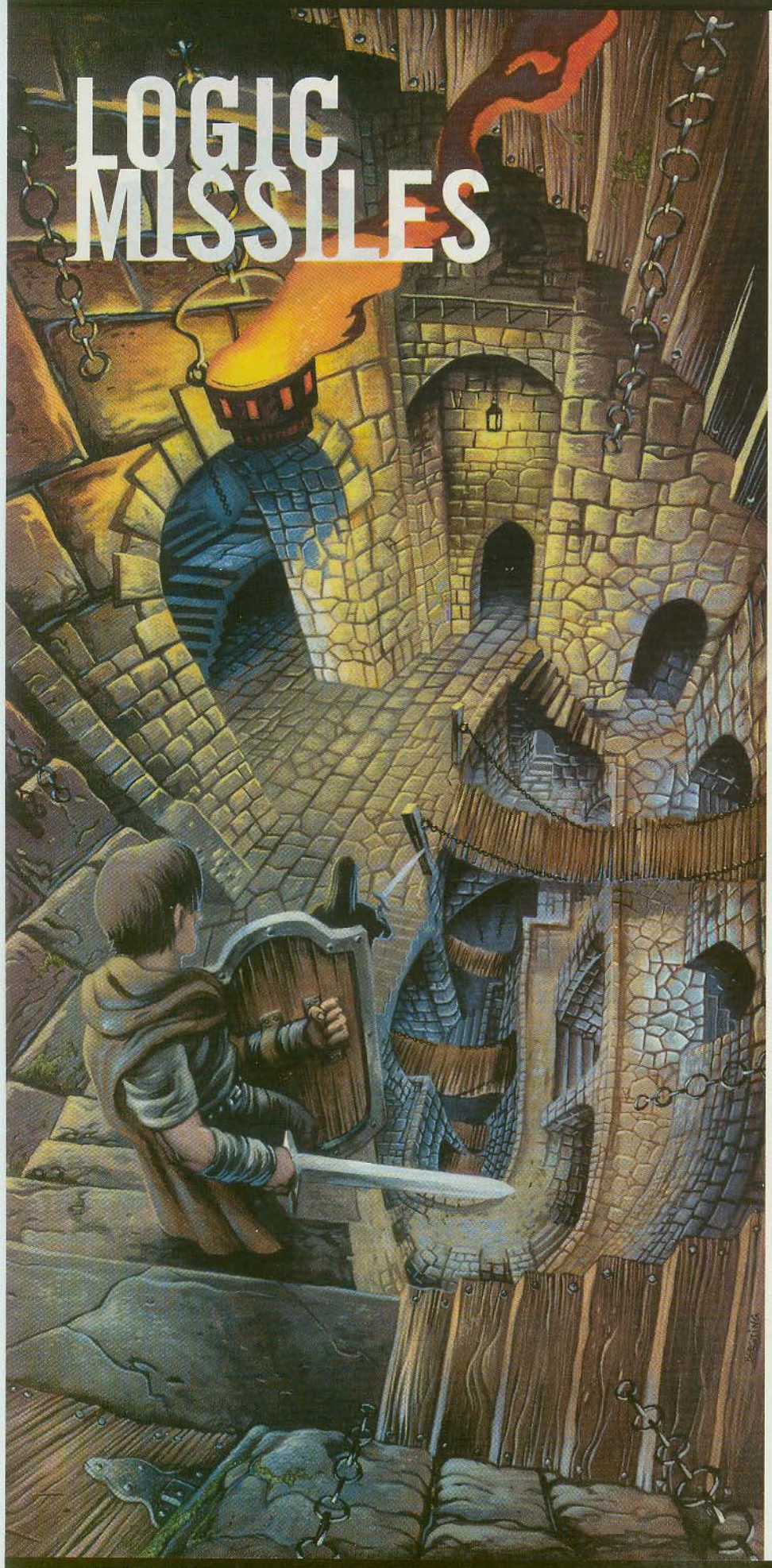
DM: Your wand is gone.

Jules: (stands up, points at me, shouts) You're not the boss of me!

Great, huh? Like I said before, there is nothing like a little bit of good manners to create a lively, non-stop, action-packed gaming session. See you in the dungeon! Huzzah!



LOGIC MISSILES



by Mike Selinker
illustrated by Peter Bergting

Following up issue #271's article on word puzzles, our puzzle expert now turns his attention to deductive reasoning puzzles. Here, Mike shows you step-by-step how to infuse your campaign with mazes, logical bafflers, math puzzles, physical puzzles, and chess puzzles.

Paradoxically (and what word could better begin an article on logic?), it is logic that holds the world of fantasy together. It is precisely the imposition of logical constraints on the illogical that prevents a world of magic and dragons from devolving into incomprehensibility. The player characters use deduction and intuition to find dungeons, thwart traps, avoid ambushes, and liberate treasures. Puzzles that test your players' skills in deduction mirror those PCs' actions.

As you create these puzzles, keep one thing in mind: The process of deduction should be fun. You can squelch that fun by making puzzles too hard or too detailed. Try to get the most enjoyment as efficiently as you can. After all, no one likes to wander forever in a maze of dead ends, or grind down evaluating useless factoids in a logic problem. Don't hide your cleverness in a haze of unnecessary information.

DESIGNING LOGIC PROBLEMS

Logic problems make solvers evaluate possibilities until, as Sherlock Holmes put it, what remains is the truth. Think of designing a logic problem as you would think of solving one: You have to winnow down lots of possibilities into one correct answer. But you get an advantage over your solver: You know the right answer.

A simple logic problem usually requires making sense of a single complex statement of relationship. For example, you might say:

As a tilt begins, four centaur paladins champ at each other in four neighboring paddocks. If Sir Loygne is not next to Sir Endar and Sir Osis is not next to Sir Endar, who is next to Sir Loygne if Sir

Osis and Sir Vyvalle are next to each other?

Ignoring the uncalled-for puns, you should be able to cut through the confusing sentence structure and figure out who starts in what paddock.

Making such an uncomplicated logic problem merely requires you to figure out what relationship you want between the elements in the problem. Find the most roundabout way to say the relationship, and then test all other possibilities until you're sure only one can be right.

A more complex style of logic problem involves multiple statements of a complex relationship. To design such a problem, think of a theme. It could be about mages casting spells in a duel or dragons counting their hoards or any other such setup. Below is a puzzle about orcs and their tribal heritage.

Start with some variables on which the puzzle will turn. You can probably think of several: the orcish tribal names (like Red Hand), their weapons of choice (like a sword), and their main opponents (like elves). So you need a small list of possibilities for each one. The larger the number of possibilities, the harder it will be to design and solve. This example is limited to three possibilities for each.

Lay the possibilities into a solving grid as in **Figure 1**. The grid allows for all possibilities to meet each other (in this case it's tribe-weapon, tribe-foe, and weapon-foe). If you have more than three variables, mix the order of the horizontal variables when you enter the vertical variables so that everything meets everything else.

Now it's time to control possibilities. Clues for a logic problem should lead the solver to a conclusion. A positive statement might be, "The Pink Eye orcs fight the gnomes." A negative statement might be, "The Pink Eye orcs have never met the kobolds." As you can see, a positive statement eliminates more possibilities than a negative one, so you should try to use more negative statements than positive ones.

As you write clues, eliminate and confirm possibilities in the grid. Eliminated possibilities get an ✖, while confirmed ones get an ●. Consider these statements:

1. **The Red Hand orcs don't use bows.**
2. **The orcs that use spears have never met the bow-wielding elves.**
3. **Kobolds have never seen the Red Hand or the orcs that use swords.**

These statements allow the entering of the ✖'s and ●'s. You can intuit that the Red Hand orcs use spears because clue 1 says that they don't use bows, and clue 3 implies that the Red Hand are different orcs than those who use swords.

It's a good goal to use as few clues as possible. So clues that give multiple pieces of info are highly prized. You can see that in the tribe-weapon section (upper left), one single negative or positive statement fills in that section. So you can eliminate all but the correct possibilities with one more clue:

4. **The Black Ears have no idea what an arrow is.**

Since this means the Black Ear orcs can't be bow-users nor can they be the bow-wielding elves' foes, everything falls into place. Suddenly you know that the Black Ear orcs must use swords, which means they can't fight the kobolds, which means . . . well, try it, and you'll see.

LOGIC PUZZLES: FIGURE ONE

A grid like this allows you to chart out your process of deduction. Three categories are incorporated in a way to eventually establish all of the associations that the puzzle requires.

	SWORD	SPEAR	BOW	ELVES	GNOMES	KOBOLDS
RED HAND						
BLACK EARS		1			2	
PINK EYE						
ELVES						
GNOMES		3				
KOBOLDS						

1 Relationship of tribe names to weapons the tribes use.
2 Relationship of tribe names to foes those tribes fight.
3 Relationship of weapons tribes use to foes that tribes fight.

After three clues you are able to remove any options that the clues specifically mention. After doing so it is clear that the Red Hand Orcs use spears, which lead to more conclusions...

	SWORD	SPEAR	BOW	ELVES	GNOMES	KOBOLDS
RED HAND	✖ 3		✖ 1			✖ 3
BLACK EARS						
PINK EYE						
ELVES		✖ 2				
GNOMES						
KOBOLDS	✖ 3					

1. The Red Hand orcs don't use bows.
2. The orcs that use spears have never met the bow-wielding elves.
3. Kobolds have never seen the Red Hand or the orcs that use swords.

Once you've drawn all of the deductions only two relationships are unknown (in light blue). However, the final clue makes it all fall into place.

	SWORD	SPEAR	BOW	ELVES	GNOMES	KOBOLDS
RED HAND	✖	●	✖	✖	●	✖
BLACK EARS	●	✖	✖ 4	●	✖	✖
PINK EYE	✖	✖	●	✖	✖	●
ELVES	●	✖	✖			
GNOMES	✖	●	✖			
KOBOLDS	✖	✖	●			

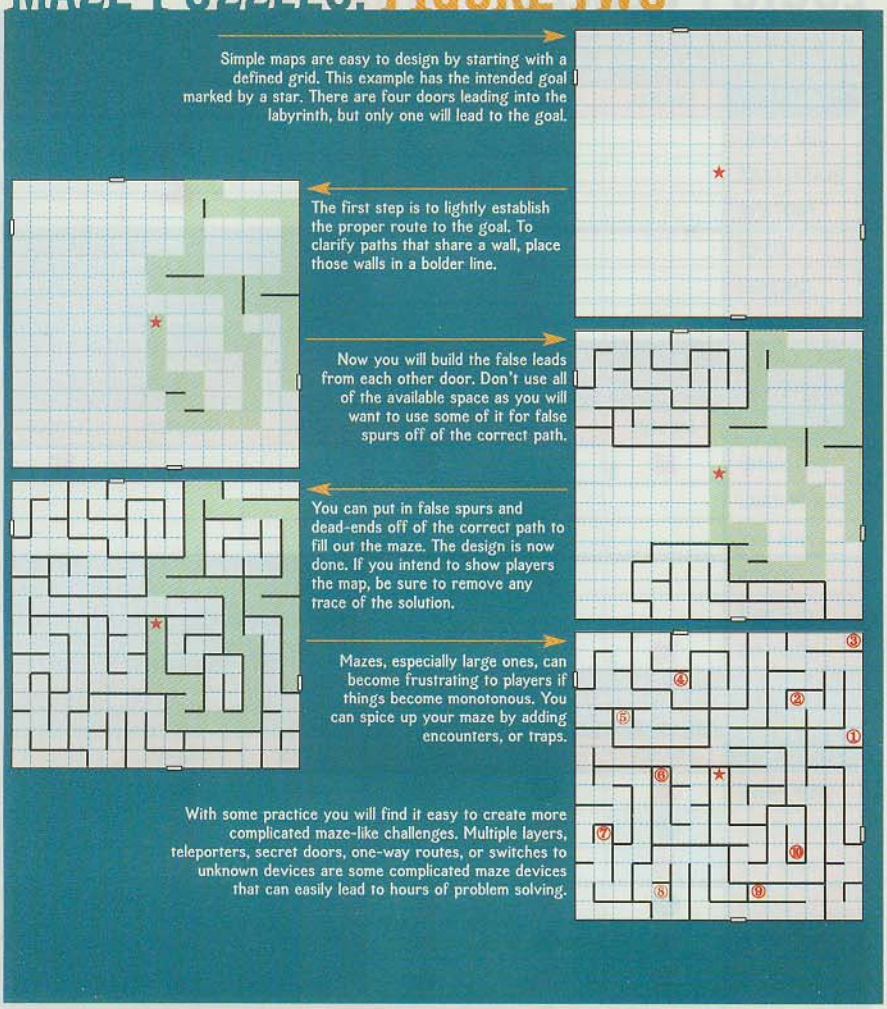
The final clue:
4. The Black Ears have no idea what an arrow is.

A logic problem is a little easier if you give the solvers the blank grid; it's usually more fun to watch them make their own. You can always make a logic problem harder by increasing the number of variables, increasing the number

LOGIC PROBLEM CHECKLIST

- ☐ Pick a theme for the puzzle.
- ☐ Choose three or more variables, with possibilities for each.
- ☐ Map the variables in a grid so that each possibility lines up with all the others.
- ☐ Write clues that eliminate and confirm possibilities until one truth remains.
- ☐ Streamline and double-check all the clues to confirm the right answer.
- ☐ Prepare a single question that comes from one of the last bits of confirmed information you enter into the puzzle.

MAZE PUZZLES: FIGURE TWO


Simple maps are easy to design by starting with a defined grid. This example has the intended goal marked by a star. There are four doors leading into the labyrinth, but only one will lead to the goal.
The first step is to lightly establish the proper route to the goal. To clarify paths that share a wall, place those walls in a bolder line.
Now you will build the false leads from each other door. Don't use all of the available space as you will want to use some of it for false spurs off of the correct path.
You can put in false spurs and dead-ends off of the correct path to fill out the maze. The design is now done. If you intend to show players the map, be sure to remove any trace of the solution.
Mazes, especially large ones, can become frustrating to players if things become monotonous. You can spice up your maze by adding encounters, or traps.
With some practice you will find it easy to create more complicated maze-like challenges. Multiple layers, teleporters, secret doors, one-way routes, or switches to unknown devices are some complicated maze devices that can easily lead to hours of problem solving.

of possibilities in each variable, or using non-binary conditions. If each orc tribe used one OR two of the three weapons, the puzzle might be a lot harder.

Once you've crafted the logic problem, you need some way to deliver it: an old man at a crossroads, a brittle scroll, a magic door, whatever. That source should ask the PCs one question. Try to limit the question to one piece of info, though you can ask for all the relevant data. Generally, it's best to make that come from the last ● you put into the grid. Then give out the clues and watch the players' brows furl.

For the orc puzzle, a grizzled half-orc can relay the problem:

"In the valley are three tribes of orcs: the Black Ears, the Red Hands, and the Pink Eyes. They each use one weapon—sword, spear, or bow—to fight one other race in the valley—elves, gnomes, or kobolds. The Red Hands don't use bows. The orcs that use spears have never met the bow-wielding elves. Kobolds have never seen the Red Hand or the orcs that use swords. And the Black Ears have no idea what a arrow is. So knowing all that, what weapon do the gnome-fighting orcs use?"

DESIGNING MAZES

Mazes and dungeons have been linked ever since Daedalus built one to contain the minotaur. Theseus made it back alive by keeping to the right and trailing Ariadne's ball of string behind him.

If you can draw a dungeon, you've already got the skills you need to make a maze. When mapping a dungeon, you put in a starting point, multiple branches, dead ends, and a highly sought end point. That's basically how you design a maze.

Take a sheet of graph paper and block off the boundaries of your maze depending on how long you want it to take to solve. A bigger maze allows more chances for getting lost, but takes longer to design and solve.

As with most puzzles, you need a *raison d'etre* for your maze. Are you keeping someone in, keeping someone out, or keeping someone who gets in from getting back out? The answer to that question will determine where you start, as you want to start from the point of view of the person trying to solve the maze.

If you're trying to stop someone from getting to the center, you—and they—will start by putting multiple entrances on the outside. If you're trying to stop someone from getting out, start by putting multiple entrances in or near the center. If you're trying to stop someone who gets in from getting out, you'll start with one entrance on the outside and put your branching point somewhere on the inside (perhaps behind the first stone wall that comes crashing down behind the PCs).

The 15x15 maze at left (a fairly small one) starts with the PCs on the outside aiming toward the center, marked with a star (**Figure 2**). Now it needs multiple start points, so start by opening a door on each wall.

The bulk of the work from here on is drawing borders around the paths that wind toward the center before all but one of them dead end. Dead ends can cross each other's paths, but the true path needs to have only one method of access. So the next step is to lightly shade the true path. A good true path comes near many parts of the maze. Though the borders of the true path will become important, at this point you only put in walls where it's necessary to divide the path from itself.

Now the fake leads come in. Start putting borders around the paths that don't lead to the center; they can't

MAZE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Determine where the solvers will start and where they're going.
- ☐ Plot the boundaries of the maze and its entrance point(s).
- ☐ Shade a true path from the correct entrance to the correct goal.
- ☐ Border the fake paths both from false starts and the end.
- ☐ Border the true path, including fake branches off the true path.
- ☐ Clean up any loose ends and double-check for any alternate true paths.
- ☐ Prepare a clean version for your players that doesn't show the true path.

intersect the true path. Make thicker pencil marks to surround the fake paths, so they branch off from and loop back on themselves. Don't try to fill in the whole grid at this point, just the paths from fake entrances.

Finally, every maze maker knows that some solvers will start from the end point and work their way outward. So, as you fill in the misroutes off the true path, also work your way outward from the end point on one or more additional fake paths. (This isn't necessary if your solver can't see the whole maze, which will be the case most of the time the PC is stuck inside it.) Once you're done with that, check your maze for unexpected answers and then you're done. If you're going to show the maze to the players, copy it first to make sure they can't see the true path or any other pencil scratchings that might give them hints.

If the PCs are inside the maze, it can be fun from the players' perspective, but it can also be tedious. If you just read a series of directions ("You turn left, go 30 feet, turn right, go 10 feet . . ."), it might be dreadfully dull and lead to contentious mapping errors. You can spice up a dungeon maze with plenty of traps, monsters, puzzles, and even secret doors. Teleportation spaces are especially fun.

DESIGNING MATH PUZZLES

Math is hard—and that's what makes it fun. A mathematical puzzle requires getting your brain around abstract numbers to find concrete results. It's best when those concrete results impact your PCs. Consider this volatile scenario.

Your 7th-level PC stands on a platform with nothing but a pencil and a piece of graph paper. "Hah!" the evil sorcerer says. "In a few minutes, the platform beneath your feet will vanish, dropping you into my gigantic water-filled cavern. At the point you will drop, there is a point on one wall that is 1 hour north, a point on another wall that is 1 hour east, a point on yet a third wall that is 1 hour south, and a point on a fourth and final wall that is 1 hour west. At each corner of the room—which I will roughly call northwest, northeast, southeast, and southwest, though only one is exactly that direction from the central point where you enter the room—is a switch that, when all are tripped, will instantly drain the water from the room. The northwest switch is a half hour from the central point where you enter the room. The northeast switch is 2 hours and 40 minutes from the central point. The southeast switch is 1 hour and 50 minutes from the central point. And the southwest switch is 2 hours from the central point. I will cast a water breathing spell on you, which will give you 10 hours of breathing time. If you make it out alive, I will set you free!" Once you hit the water, what will you do to survive?

As you can see, this math puzzle has serious consequences if the player can't figure it out.

The first step to designing a math puzzle is determining your measure. The measure is any method of assessing numerical values, be it in coins or weight or land area or pack animals. Though all numerical, these measures can be very different in application: Coins, for example, can be divided into smaller denominations, whereas it's kind of messy to do that to pack animals.

For an example, the measure will be uses of magic items. Such items often approach uselessness when used. By noticing that wrinkle, you can build a math puzzle around magic items.

Now you need a medium, the method of tracking numerical changes. In this case, the medium is going to be the type of magic item. You need an item with sufficient variation in cost or effects. Something using one charge per identical effect—say, a *ring of three wishes*—isn't going to be very interesting in a math problem. So this puzzle will use an item with immense variation: the *necklace of fireballs*. This item's globes deal different amounts of damage, ranging from 2d6 all the way to 10d6. This is fertile ground for a puzzle.

Now that there's a measure and a medium, the puzzle needs a catalyst, something that causes mathematical change to occur. In this case, it's gonna have to be people on fire. In crafting the puzzle, pick the wackiest combination of explosions and victims possible, making the players work as hard as they can.

Start by listing your options, extrapolating from page 222 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. You should pick one of the necklaces (such as Type VII) and list its qualities:

One 10d6 missile
Two 9d6 missiles
Two 7d6 missiles
Two 5d6 missiles
Two 3d6 missiles

Then set up a situation where these *fireballs* might be used. A *fireball* affects a large area, one 40 feet across (8 five-foot squares). So you can set the victims 15 feet apart in a straight line, knowing that each victim will be hit by any *fireball* that lands next to his or square as well as those of the people on either side.

Now assign *fireballs* to damage certain victims. If you can find a subtle mathematical trick to toss in, more's the better. Here's one such possible situation:

MATH PUZZLES: FIGURE THREE

Math puzzles are particularly difficult for players unaccustomed to dealing with abstract mathmatical data. Graphical presentations can sometimes simplify the task. Here we see seven vampires and the exact amount of dice damage that each should take.

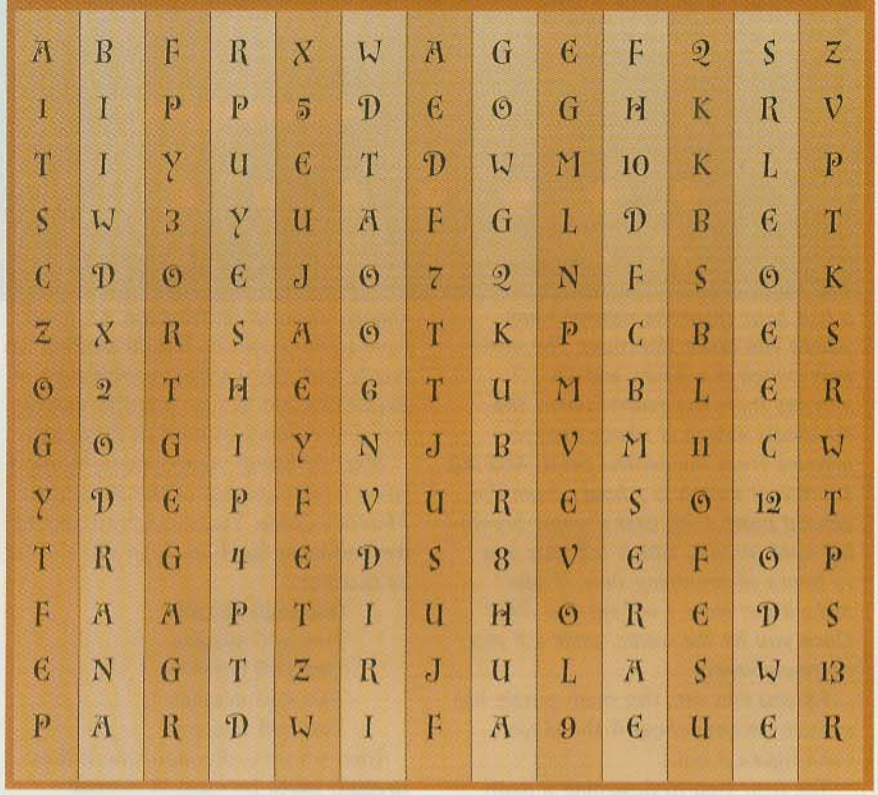
Necklace of Fireballs: one 10d6 missle, two 9d6 missiles, two 7d6 missiles, two 5d6 missiles, and two 3d6 missiles. Be sure to reserve any one missle for the head vampire that will arrive later. Each fireball has a 40-foot area, so each one could conceivably affect three different vampires.

MATH PUZZLE CHECKLIST

- [ ] Choose a measure, the method of assessing numerical values.
- [ ] Choose a medium, the method of tracking changes in the measure.
- [ ] Choose a catalyst that changes the measures in an interesting and fun way, then come up with a combination that works.
- [ ] Craft the explanation so that it delivers this information in a tricky manner.
- [ ] Double-check your math.

PHYSICAL PUZZLES: FIGURE FOUR

Physical puzzles can be exceptionally interesting because they tend to appeal to all types of gamers. In this example you've encountered thirteen columns of characters that slide up and down. The challenge is to position each slider in a way that reveals the secret message.



The town is being attacked by vampires! The local apprentice wizard gives you the town's only magic item, a Type VII necklace of fireballs. The necklace contains one 10d6 missile, two 9d6 missiles, two 7d6 missiles, two 5d6 missiles, and two 3d6 missiles. Knowing the vampires are the undead remnants of an adventuring party, the apprentice tells you that you should hit the assassin with 19 dice of damage, the barbarian with 22 dice, the cleric with 18 dice, the druid with 16 dice, the elf with 13 dice, the fighter with 22 dice, and the gnome with 14 dice. The vampires carry some precious magic items, so the apprentice wants you to do exactly the amount of damage needed so as to minimize the chance of destroying the items.

The seven vampires are in a straight line, each 15 feet apart, in alphabetical order from the left like in Figure 3.

At the last second, the apprentice warns you that you must save one fireball for the head vampire, who surely will show up after his seven minions are killed. Any one fireball will do for that purpose, because he will flee the moment he suffers damage from fire. So which fireballs should you throw where?

Mathematically, this is a pretty tough problem. This pattern—apply a measure and a medium to a situation—works for most any math puzzle. But the most important thing to designing math puzzles is that there be some clever twist or quirk of the puzzle. Just adding up a bunch of numbers does not a puzzle make.

DESIGNING PHYSICAL PUZZLES

Though roleplaying is an imagination-driven activity, bringing your players back to reality with a physical puzzle can enliven your games. Sure, it breaks the fourth wall, but your players will be too busy fidgeting with your puzzle to notice.

You can always buy a physical puzzle. Any quality puzzle and game store will have dozens, from entangled metal loops to those little sliding square puzzles. Two friends of mine, Warren Wyman and Mike Ryan, use puzzle boxes to befuddle their players. If you use any of these, remember that they wouldn't sell so many units if they weren't hard. So if you hand a mixed-up Rubik's Cube to your players, don't expect the game to advance for a while.

It's more fun to make your own physical puzzles. But unless you're a skilled welder, you can't make a sliding metal loop puzzle. Try using household objects, like cards and coins.

Cards give the aspiring puzzlist many options. You can trigger by number, suit, face-up-or-face-down, vertical-or-horizontal-facing, poker hands, or any combination of these. Tarot cards can also be used with even greater richness.

Dice give the same range of options, since you can use polyhedral dice to run ranges from 1-4 to 1-20 (or even 1-100). Using dice even allows you to play with odds, a welcome change from puzzles that require absolute answers.

Coins are also rich with options. They're not only round and clangy, they have two sides. This gives a lot of room to play with. You can create puzzles that involve coins moving, flipping, and even making change. You can substitute pennies for copper pieces, dimes for silver pieces, and Sacajawea dollars for gold pieces, mirroring the exchange rate in D&tD. Here's an example of how you can link cleverness with physical skill.

A moneychanger might lay out nine coins as below and say, "These coins can be altered so that no heads coin is horizontally or vertically adjacent to any heads coin in a row or column. But it's bad policy to let the customers handle more than a smidgen of the merchandise, so you can only touch one coin."

You can use bottles, water, toothpicks, and even knots to make puzzles based on manual dexterity. Here, though, you run a risk of the player saying, "I have an 18 Dex! Can't I just solve this?" And if you're thinking of using manual dexterity puzzles, you should recall what happened to the man who created the Gordian Knot. This was a series of ropes tangled together in such a way that no man could undo them. No man, that is, until Alexander the Great cleaved the lot down the center with his sword—then started in on the clever puzzlemaker. Fair warning.

Another method is to combine the physical puzzle with a test of knowledge. A classic such puzzle is the

combination lock, which has thousands or even millions of possibilities but only one right answer. You can use the combination lock to test your players' ingenuity, but it'll require some effort.

To start, buy or make a lock. A hardware store can provide a standard gym locker-type lock, but all that will allow you to do is attach a math puzzle to the lock (not a bad idea). If you want to attach a word puzzle, you'll have to get inventive. A good example is a door lock which requires reading and acting upon a message spelled out in the tumblers.

First, write the puzzle on graph paper. Spell the message out as if the tumblers lined up in the right order. Then put a column starting point in a row across the top (the puzzle at left uses numbers to designate the starting point on a 13x13 grid).

Now, "spin" the tumblers, so that the starting point designators don't even come close to lining up. This is how you want your puzzle to look to your players when all is done. With this written-out map in place, build the puzzle.

Write this sequence three times on a large sheet of graph paper, so that the three sequences are stacked one on top of the other. Then paste the graph paper to hardstock cardboard. Using a heavy ruler, carefully slice an Xacto knife down the lines between the columns. You now have the tumblers built.

Now for the lock itself. Take a new sheet of cardboard and cut out a square big enough to feature the entire "lock" once (in this case, 13x13). Staple it to a third sheet of cardboard so that it holds the tumblers in place but doesn't impede their movement. Now the players can manipulate the puzzle all they like. Set up the puzzle with a story or situation and you're ready to go.

PHYSICAL PUZZLE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Pick or design an object you can manipulate easily.
- ☐ Invent a way to manipulate the object.
- ☐ Hide the path of manipulation with other fake paths.
- ☐ Make sure the puzzle can't be solved by physically breaking it.
- ☐ Test the puzzle multiple times before giving it to your players.

Outside the impenetrable door to a minotaur wizard's lab is a massive rack of weapons (see Figure 4). You hope that the lock on the door can suggest an access to the lab.

DESIGNING CHESS PUZZLES

I hesitate to bring up this subject, because it's such a D&D cliché. All the way back at least to the 1981 module *The Ghost Tower of Inverness,* adventurers have been getting stuck in oversized chess puzzles. Even J.K. Rowling hauls out this hoary dilemma in her first *Harry Potter* novel. But hey, I've hardly got a leg to stand on, since I threw readers of this magazine a chess trap in a recent issue. Someday you'll victimize your players this way, so let's get into it.

If you don't know the rules of chess, don't make a chess puzzle till you do. It's a complex game—though if you can handle D&D, chess won't faze you. There are many books on the subject, though you'll enjoy it more if you someone teaches you.

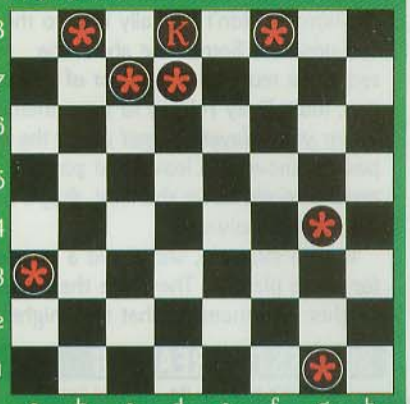
Assuming you've got the rules of chess down, get your chessboard out. Now you need a theme. A chess theme can center around a single piece or type of piece, such as knights. Or it might be a type of move, like the en passant (where a pawn captures another pawn as it moves by on its first move) or the fork (where a piece threatens two pieces, requiring one to be sacrificed). Think of a tactic of which you were especially proud, or you especially resented when it happened to you.

Then pick between eight and sixteen pieces, some in white (the players' color) and some in black (your color). Your theme will dictate some of these pieces. Find a thematically appropriate position that represents either a checkmate or an escape from checkmate. Don't worry about whether you can come up with a scenario where the pieces got into those positions, unless it's crucial to your theme.

Then backstep from that position to another position that will become your starting position. With each move, make sure no other move makes sense. With your pieces, make sure each move you make is the only one you could make under the circumstances. If you've got two choices for your move, you have to go back to your end position and

CHESS PUZZLES: FIGURE FIVE

Chess puzzles offer a vast variety of starting positions. It's usually easier to select some spots to put pieces first then calculate the variables. For this puzzle, we'll start by looking at the following spaces for an intriguing setup.



The goal for the players is to place three white knights anywhere in the red row with the intention of ultimately putting the black king into checkmate. The players may not place their knights, or move into, spaces threatened by black pieces.

K KING
N KNIGHT
Q QUEEN
B BISHOP
R ROOK
P PAWN

CHESS PUZZLE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Make sure you and your players all know the rules of chess.
- ☐ Come up with a theme for your puzzle.
- ☐ On a chessboard, array pieces in an end position.
- ☐ Work backwards to your start position.
- ☐ Test the problem for multiple solutions.
- ☐ Set the board in the start position and present it to your players.

start again. (An exception might be if you have two solutions, both of which lead to the same result.) You should not have to move more than five times before creating the starting position.

When you're done, your starting position shouldn't logically lead to the end position. Something about the sequence must be a moment of inspiration, most likely related to your theme. When your players forget about the en passant move and leave that pawn around to pin down the king, they'll be kicking themselves.

For an example, we'll build a puzzle for three players. They'll be the white knights. The theme is that the knights will get a row to themselves, but the black pieces will control the rest of the board. After some jockeying, you might decide to keep the black king in his starting square, and mark in **Figure 5** some places where you might put more black pieces. The red row represents the players' zone of control.

Now determine where the players' knights will go. That'll be the players' job as well. To do that, you must create a position where the players can box in the black king. So you might come up with this puzzle using **Figure 5**.

The blackguard king demands you face him in a human chess match. Since it is his kingdom, he will control seven rows of the chessboard, while you get but one. As you claim to be valiant, you three must act only as knights. Being the type of king that he is, he decrees that he also commands three knights as well as nine other servitors, any of which can strike you dead if you get in a position where they can attack. Of course, only one of you can move each turn, and only one foe can move each turn. You begin with your three knights on any three squares in the red row, and will take the first turn. Can you trap the king without any of you getting killed?

SUGGESTED READING

This article gives you the basics of making many kinds of puzzles. If you want more than an overview, though, here are some serious reference works.

The Random House Puzzlemaker's Handbook (Random House), by Mel Rosen and Stan Kurzban, teaches would-be cruciverbalists how to make crosswords and other word puzzles.

Fred B. Wrixon's *Codes, Ciphers, and Other Cryptic and Clandestine Communication* (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers) shows dozens of code types and how to construct them.

Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon's *Random House Guide to Cryptic Crosswords* (Random House) is highly recommended for its wordplay advice.

Puzzles Old and New and *New Book of Puzzles* (Freeman), by Jerry Slocum and Jack Botermans, are hands-on guides to making physical puzzles, down to the welding and woodcut patterns.

ANSWERS

LOGIC PROBLEMS

Sir Osis is next to Sir Loygne. Osis and Vyvalle are in adjoining paddocks. Since Osis isn't next to Endar, three possibilities exist:

Loygne-Osis-Vyvalle-Endar,
Osis-Vyvalle-Loygne-Endar,
and
Endar-Loygne-Osis-Vyvalle.

The latter two require Loygne and Endar to be neighbors, which isn't possible. So it must be

Loygne-Osis-Vyvalle-Endar.

So Loygne's only neighbor is Osis.

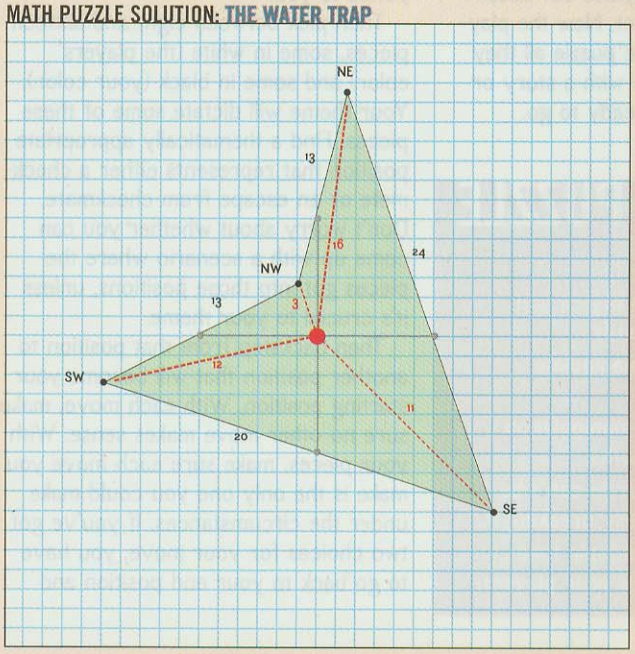
The orcs in the valley work out this way: The Red Hands don't use bows nor are they sword-users, so they must use spears. Since the Black Ears don't know what arrows are, they must use swords. So the Pink Eyes use bows. Those who fight the bow-using elves aren't the Black Ears (they don't know what arrows are) or the Red Hands (spear-users haven't met the elves), so the Pink Eyes clash with the elves. The kobolds have never seen the Red Hand orcs, so they fight the Black Ears. Therefore, the gnomes fight the spear-using Red Hand orcs.

MATH PUZZLES

The water trap is pretty bad, but it is survivable. Mark the center point at an intersection on a quadrille (4 squares per inch) sheet of graph paper. Count six squares left, right, up, and down, putting a dot at the end of each line. One corner must be either straight northwest, northeast, southwest, or southeast. Trying all of them shows that only the southeast corner, 2 3/4 inches away from the center point, allows for all of the walls to cross the points marked at the horizontal and vertical lines. Draw all the intersecting lines, then note the lengths of all the lines created, as shown in the illustration.

The correct path from the center is to follow the path to the northwest corner (30 minutes, or 3 squares), then take one of the outside paths that are 2 hours and 10 minutes (13 squares) long. If you go to the southwest corner, you'll take the outside path to the southeast corner (3 hours and 20 minutes, or 20 squares), then continue on the outside to the northeast corner (4 hours, or 24 squares). If instead you went from the northwest corner to the northeast corner, take those two outside paths in reverse order. Either way, you'll cover 10 hours (60 squares), just in time for the *water breathing* spell to wear off.

MATH PUZZLE SOLUTION: THE WATER TRAP



The *necklace of fireballs* puzzle requires you to consider complex combinations of dice of damage until something works. The two vampires at the far end are the starting point. The gnome suffers 14 dice of damage, which can only come from two combinations: a 9-dice missile and a 5-dice missile, or two 7-dice missiles. The first possibility means that with 14 dice of damage

ANSWERS

contributing to the fighter's 22 dice, he's hit by 8 more dice of damage (which must be a 5-dice missile and a 3-dice missile) that the gnome doesn't suffer. That means the elf suffers an additional 5 dice of damage—which is impossible since the necklace only has two 5-dice *fireballs*.

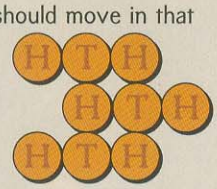
So the gnome must suffer two 7-dice *fireballs,* and the fighter, as above, is affected by a 3-dice missile and a 5-dice missile. Now let's look at the other end of the line. The assassin suffers 19 dice of damage, which can only come four ways: 7 + 3 + 9, 7 + 7 + 5, 5 + 5 + 9, and 10 + 9. The former three are out as the fighter took both 7-dice missiles and one of the two 5-dice missiles, so the assassin is hit by a 10-dice and a 9-dice missile. This leaves a 9-dice missile, a 5-dice missile, and a 3-dice missile.

But with all this damage flying around, we have yet to injure the cleric, who suffers 18 dice of damage, or more than all those remaining put together. Thus, one (but not both) of the *fireballs* that hits the barbarian must also hit the cleric. If it's the 9-dice missile, the cleric must also be hit by the remaining 9-dice missile and nothing else. Since the druid suffers 16 dice of damage, he must also be hit by 7 more dice of damage—again impossible, since the 7-dice missiles are down by the gnome.

So the cleric suffers the 10-dice *fireball* from the barbarian. The cleric now must be hit by the unused 3-dice and 5-dice missiles, only the former of which injures the barbarian. But both also affect the druid, who must also be hit by 8 more dice of damage—and now there aren't any missiles left (the 9-dice missile must be saved for the head vampire). So the 5-dice missile and 3-dice missile that affected the fighter must also affect the elf, who also suffers 5 dice from the one that hit the druid.

PHYSICAL PUZZLES

In the coin puzzle, push the leftmost or rightmost coin of the second row toward the middle. The rest of the coins in that row should move in that direction, leaving:



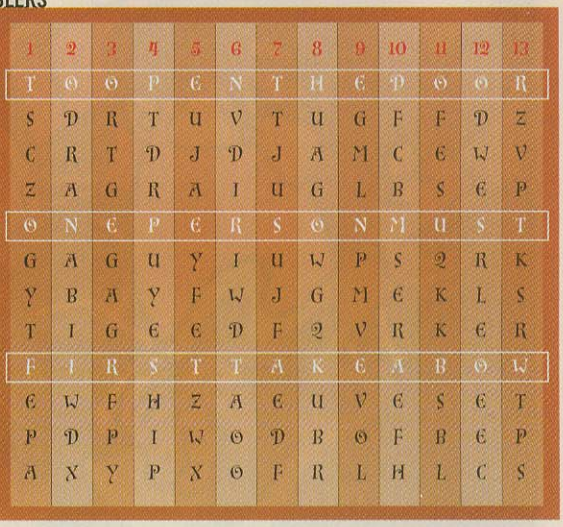
MATH PUZZLE SOLUTION: FIREBALLS

The solution to the *fireball* spell puzzle looks like this:
(Note that one of the g-dice fireballs *was reserved for the head vampire)*

PHYSICAL PUZZLE SOLUTION: TUMBLERS

Perceptive players will notice the presence of numbers among the field of letters. When the numbers are aligned along one row, other rows are aligned to reveal the secret message.

Puzzles like this can be constructed using easy-to-find materials such as popsicle sticks, paper towel cores, or even sculpted out of modelling clay.


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
T Θ Θ P Є N T H Є D Θ Θ R
S D R T U V T U G F F D Z
C R T D J D J A M C Є W V
Z A G R A I U G L B S Є P
Θ N Є P Є R S Θ N M U S T
G A G U Y I U W P S 2 R K
Y B A Y F W J G M Є K L S
T I G Є Є D F 2 V R K Є R
F I R S T T A K Є A B Θ W
Є W F H Z A Є U V Є S Є T
P D P I W Θ D B Θ F B Є P
A X Y P X Θ F R L H L C S

The tumblers line up as shown in the above illustration. The message in rows 2, 6, and 9 reads, "To open the door, one person must first take a bow." Since there is a weapons rack nearby, this suggests that a bow (the projectile weapon) must be pulled as a lever to open the door.

CHESS PUZZLES

White can begin at c5, f5, and h5. Move knight 1 to b7. If the king goes to c8, move knight 2 to e7 (mate). If the king goes to e8, move knight 3 to g7. The king moves to f7. Knight 1 goes to the king's original position of d8 (mate), trapping the king among his many servitors. D

CHESS PUZZLE SOLUTION: THREE KNIGHTS

White has a few options for starting positions. No knight may be placed on a5, d5, e5, or g5 because all of those squares are threatened.

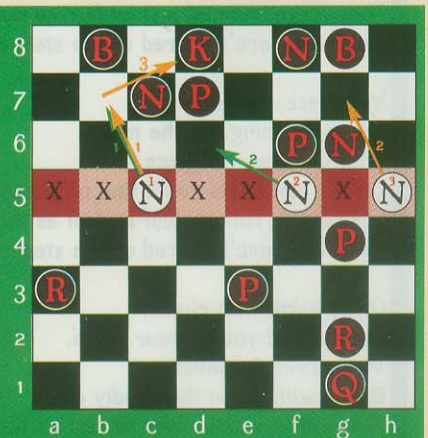
That only leaves four spots for the three white knights. The correct placement is c5, f5, and h5. It will become clear as you play out the options.

White will move first by moving N1 to b7 which puts the king in check. He must move out of check.

The king has only two places to move: c8 or e8. N2 threatens e7, so that vacant space is not a viable move.

If the king moves to c8, then the N2 may move to d6 for the checkmate. N2 receives the glory for throwing the king into check and protecting N1.

Should the king instead move to e8, N3 may move to g7 for the check. However, the king may still move to f7. That invites N1 to occupy the king's starting spot, d8, for the checkmate.



BARD ON THE RUN

STEEL DRESSED MAN

Sung to the tune of
"Sharp Dressed Man" by ZZ Top

Breast plate, steel shoes,
There's no way that I'm gonna lose.
Tin suit, long blade,
Goin' out on a crusade.
They leave, runnin' just as fast as they can
Cos every orc's scared of the steel dressed man.

Vambrace, gorget,
Got everything for the melee.
With greeves, codpiece,
On the battlefield you'll find no surcease
They leave, runnin' just as fast as they can
Cos every orc's scared of the steel dressed man.

Great helm, with plume,
Gonna send you to your doom.
Visor down, gauntlets,
Dance with me in the deadly duet
They leave, runnin' just as fast as they can
Cos every orc's scared of the
steel dressed man.

by Michael Dean • illustrated by Peter Delgado Jr.

FRY FRY FRY

Sung to the tune of
*"Bye, Bye, Bye" by *NSync*

Dungeoning group unite
Dwarf's ready for a fight
The cleric's done her rite
Hey, wizard c'mon
The rogue will look for traps
While the cleric makes the maps
So grab your backpack's straps
Let's take off, get gone

BRIDGE:
You know we really need you, mage
It ain't no lie
Cast *fireball*, the room's a cage
Monsters fry, fry, fry

CHORUS I:
When we come to a dungeon door
Behind we find a room full of
yellow spore
Time to call for the fire guy
Monsters fry, fry, fry

CHORUS II:
Everyone is huddled in the hall
Open up the door and cast your *fireball*
Close the door and heave a great
big sigh
Monsters fry, fry, fry

We're going delving deep
To find a treasure heap
With enough gold to keep
Us rich for a while
You know it's guarded well
In stories bards will tell
It'll be the gates hell
And we'll stand and smile

(REPEAT BRIDGE)
(REPEAT CHORUS I)
(REPEAT CHORUS II)

Get your things 'cos we're
leaving soon
We're gonna hit the road, be
on the trail by noon
Fry Fry

We need to have you desperately
Your spells will be our heavy-duty
artillery

When we finally reach the end
For whom will we send
Who can we depend on then?
Fry fry fry
Everyone stays in the hall
Cast that *fireball*
And we'll breathe a sigh
Fry fry fry
When we come to a dungeon door
Behind we find a room full of
yellow spore
Everyone stays in the hall
Call the fire guy
Monsters fry, fry, fry

(REPEAT CHORUS II)

OOPS . . . I FUMBLED AGAIN

Sung to the tune of
"Oops . . . I did it Again" by Britney Spears

Oh no! I fumbled again
However I try, my rolls come up ones
Well maybe
It might seem ridiculous
My dice are always so cantankerous

BRIDGE:
'Cos I miss all my die rolls
Think that the gods are opposing me
Oh, maybe, maybe

CHORUS:
Oops . . . I fumbled again
A die roll of one
Means terrible aim
So maybe, maybe
Groups are my best target
I will hit something yet,
Besides my companions

You see, it always does this
Whatever I do
I never can win—my attacks
always miss
Never fails to amaze
All my characters die in horrible ways.

(REPEAT BRIDGE)
(REPEAT CHORUS)

(SPOKEN)
"Roll your attack."
"Britney, before you roll, there's
something I want you to have."
"Oh, a 20-sided die. But wait a minute,
isn't this . . . ?"
"Yes, my lucky one."
"But I thought your dog ate it."
"Well, baby, I got it back and cleaned
it up for you."
"You shouldn't have."

Oops . . . I fumbled again,
can't you see,
Not meant for this game
Oops . . . I just can't hit anything else
Beside my companions.

IT'S MY DUNGEON

Sung to the tune of
"It's My Party" by Leslie Gore

Nobody knows where my treasure
is kept
I've hidden it away
But you've come looking for it
And to you I have to say

CHORUS:
It's my dungeon and you'll die if
I want to
Die if I want to, Die if I want to
You will die too, it will happen to you

I've hidden my treasure deep
underground
In an abandoned mine
I've added monsters and traps
And it's protected just fine

CHORUS

You've reached the bottom and
killed all of my guards
Survived the rooms of death
Overcome all obstacles
But can you survive dragon's breath?

CHORUS

MEANWHILE... BACK IN THE SLIME-PITS OF KARVAN

Making Cutaway GMing Cut Your Way

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by Michael Sutfin

Just when you thought you had your DM all figured out, she goes and introduces a new trick into the mix. Not that it's an annoying trick, mind you. It gives everybody a chance to have their characters go off and do something they really want to do. Every so often, your PC gets to enjoy his special moment in the sun, and that's great. But it does ask you and your fellow players to think a little differently about the game and their roles in it. Naturally, while you don't want to hog all of the fun or completely dominate play, you know that every system can be worked to someone's advantage. That someone, you have always reasoned, might as well be you.

So let's look at this new trick of your DM's and see where you fit into it.

Your DM's New Trick

It all started when the adventuring party got back to town from its multi-session sojourn in the Underdark. During your subterranean adventures, each member of the group found himself faced with a problem all his own. Filjo found an ancient deed that he thought he could use to install himself as legal owner of a great manor outside the city. Belgar was bitten by a werewolf and began to fear that he, too, would become a lycanthrope. Handela, interrogating a cultist of the Black Gate, became concerned that the city's Fraternal Order of the Garter had been infiltrated by these worshippers of evil. Urjodnir rashly brought his sacred hammer down upon the head of an innocent and swore to atone for his misdeed. As for your character, Arville the Apt? Well, he left the dungeon as free of plot hooks as he entered it. It has always been your policy to avoid petty entanglements that would distract you from exploring, clearing, and looting underground complexes. As far as Arville is concerned, a city is a place to rest between adventures.

Still, it was pretty clear that you'd all decide which character's plot hook would get followed, and then you'd all troop off together after a lycanthropy cure, cultists in the Order of the Garter, or atonement for Urjodnir. Then, after you took care of the first plot, you'd move on to the second, and so on. But when you got to the surface, each player made it clear that he intended to solve his problem on his own. To your surprise, the DM not only allowed this, but encouraged it.

She asked each player in turn what he wanted to do, giving him ten or fifteen minutes in the spotlight while the rest of you sat and watched. Belgar went to an old library to find an expert on lycanthropy; when he got there, the fellow turned out to be a weird old man whose eyes darted about too quickly and who couldn't stop scratching himself. Filjo scouted "his" manor, finding it occupied by militant monks. Handela searched for a friend who belonged to the Order of the Garter, but found him missing, his living quarters in disarray. Urjodnir found the family of the man he'd slain and broke the terrible news to them.

Then the DM turned to you and asked you what Arville wanted to do. You didn't know. All of a sudden, your avoidance of plot threads had left you without a net.

Where it Comes From

What your DM is doing is called the cut-away technique. It borrows a basic device from movie and TV editing. The device can best be seen in ensemble TV shows, in which the parallel stories of a number of characters are woven together from one episode to the next: Think of *NYPD Blue* or *The Practice*. First you see a scene (or string of short scenes) establishing a situation faced by Character A. Then another set of scenes establishing Character B's situation. Then we switch back, or "cut away" to Character A, see his story advanced a little bit, then cut back to Character B, and so on. Sometimes you'll also see individual scenes featuring other characters from the show's large cast that will be developed in later episodes. Of course the characters cross back and forth from one storyline to another. Character C might argue with Character A about his strategy on the Smith case, and then help Character B prepare for a hot date.

If you look at each individual scene in one of these shows, you'll see that it's built like all the others. The scene is set and a conflict established. The central character hashes out the conflict with one or more other characters. The conflict comes to a head, and the central character either gets what he wants or is thwarted. Either way, the end of the scene leaves us with a question mark; we wonder what is going to happen next. In a show with one main character, we'd go on to a scene that answered the question. In an ensemble show, we're usually left hanging as the scriptwriters cut away to another character.

The cutaway technique works by building suspense in a couple of directions. It gets us interested in one story, promises an answer, then thwarts our

DMs TAKE NOTE

Although this article is addressed to players, DMs can make use of it too. Maybe you haven't used the cutaway technique before. If you squint properly, you can read this article as an introduction to cutaway play. To recap, here are the key points for DMs:

- ☐ The cutaway technique lets PCs go off and pursue their own plotlines by themselves.
- ☐ Restrict it to cities and other places where it's safe to split up an adventuring party, and where it's easy for PCs to find interesting people to interact with.
- ☐ Let a scene go on until it either reaches a cliffhanger point or begins to run out of steam. Then switch to another player, and so on.
- ☐ Give everybody equal time.
- ☐ Let other players listen in on scenes they're not involved with. Ask them to separate player knowledge from character knowledge.
- ☐ Encourage spectator comments and jokes until they begin to detract from the main action. Then politely but firmly ask the offending kibitzers to restrain themselves.
- ☐ Subtly insert opportunities for the players to connect up their disparate plot threads, but don't force them to do so.
- ☐ Be ready to improvise when a player goes off in an unexpected direction.
- ☐ When you become comfortable with the technique, vary the length of scenes, adding energy to the session.

desires by following another path instead. We get over our frustration as we become interested in the second thread. When it cuts at a crucial moment, we finally get the answer we've almost forgotten we cared about. Our desire for resolution is played upon, delayed, tied up in knots, and finally released at the episode's end.

How it Works in a D&D Game

Your DM is doing the same thing with her group when she adopts the cutaway technique. She's putting your character in a situation, advancing it a little, and then cutting away to another player's storyline, leaving you with a big unanswered question.

The cutaway technique has other advantages in a D&D game. Most of the time, your PCs have to work together to fulfill a goal your DM has built into her adventure. Often that goal is the looting of a dungeon. Although you can get hundreds of hours of fun out of that basic formula, sometimes the players want to spice things up a bit by pursuing storylines specific to their PCs. They feel a greater sense of control over their characters' destinies. Their characters seem more real to them, as they participate in stories arising from the traits and goals they've built into them. Any adventurers could have cleaned out the storeroom full of kobolds down on level three, but only Urjordir would try to make things right to the family of a man he accidentally killed.

Your DM might also find that the cutaway technique reduces the dead time that often occurs as players struggle to decide what their characters should do next. If everyone faces the same problem together, they must spend a fair amount of time working out the best way to solve it. The more players there are, the longer this takes. Everyone has to have a say. Plans developed by large groups always seem more likely to fail than plans put together by one or two people, because there are more people to point out potential pitfalls. If you focus too much on the pitfalls, you'll succumb to despair and never do anything.

Cutaway play doesn't just reduce the number of naysayers faced by any plan. It gives players whose characters are out of the spotlight time to make their decisions while the story flows on, uninterrupted. Sessions run cutaway style often involve more action than one in which the group sticks together.

Becoming A Better Cutaway Player

Now that you've caught on to what your DM is doing, it's time to figure out how to turn the cutaway technique to your advantage. Poor Arville is still standing there with a puzzled look on his face, wondering what he should do with his newfound freedom.

1. HAVE A GOAL

To succeed in cutaway play, you have to decide what your character wants. Otherwise, you'll squander your opportunities, wandering aimlessly from one meaningless encounter to the next. The more interesting your goal, the easier it will be for your DM to respond to it and present you with colorful and entertaining encounters. Don't worry too much about this, though: It's better to pick a simple, basic goal than to have none at all.

Your character's class suggests the sorts of goals he might have. Wizards want to learn more about magic. Rogues might look for an irresistibly daring theft to pull off. Fighters might seek trainers to tutor them in exotic fighting techniques. Bards want to find wealthy patrons, build followings, and spread their new songs to others.

A character's race might also suggest basic goals. Elves want to expand their mystical awareness through the pursuit of new experiences. Dwarves enrich their clans by establishing trade connections. Gnomes might try to perfect or peddle their odd inventions.

If you've already given a fair bit of thought to your character's background, mine it for hints as to what his goal might be. If he's a nobleman deprived of his inheritance, he'll want to get it back. If he suffers from an ancestral curse, he'll try to lift it.

If you're the sort of player who is more comfortable picking up cues given by the DM than giving her ideas, look to see if you can pick up on something that has already happened. The examples of Handela, Urjordir, and company all show how you can take an event from a dungeon adventure and turn it into a goal for later cutaway scenarios.

2. IF YOU CAN'T THINK OF A GOAL, BORROW SOMEONE ELSE'S

Sometimes you just can't think of a goal you like. This doesn't doom you to boredom whenever the DM runs a cutaway session. Solve the problem by latching onto the goal of another PC, volunteering to help him. You can choose either the goal you find most interesting, or the character your PC would be most likely to aid.

If you help another PC achieve his goal, you will share many of your spotlight scenes with his player. This can be fun: Often the most entertaining interactions in a game are between PCs. These scenes give you a chance to play up your relationship with another PC. It creates an obligation: That player will probably help your PC the next time he needs a special favor.

DMs running cutaway style make a special effort to give each player a roughly equal amount of focus time. If you team up with another PC, your scenes together will either last about twice as long as usual, or come around twice as often. You'll share the spotlight, but it will be on you for a longer period.

This is not to say that you can't have scenes to yourself while following another PC's agenda. The two of you can split up to more quickly solve the problem at hand. Let's say that Arville decides to help Filjo claim his manor. While Filjo petitions the city chancellor for a legal hearing, Arville sneaks into the monastery, hoping to overhear something juicy and incriminating he can use against the occupying monks.

3. HAVE A PLAN

Once you have a goal, you need a plan to achieve it. The secret to devising any plan is to break it down into steps. Make a list of the things you can do to get what you want. If you're not sure how to go about achieving your plan, that's a sure sign that you need more information.

Don't be alarmed if you can't map out an entire plan from A to Z. Your DM is sure to create events that throw your best-laid plans out of whack anyway; otherwise, there wouldn't be much suspense to the game. Even a plan with one or two steps on it will put you in a better position than most of your fellow players.

Ask yourself what you need to know before you can act. If you have enough information to take action, ask yourself what resources you require and how you might go about getting them. What equipment do you need? Can you find or commission a map to the area you'll need to invade, penetrate, or explore? What allies do you need?

4. USE YOUR THINKING TIME

After every cutaway, re-examine your plan to see what must change based on new information or altered circumstances. The best plans are always written in pencil!

Use the time between scenes to plan for your next moment in the spotlight. As you watch the other players grapple with their scenes, ask yourself what you're going to do the moment your turn comes up again. Be ready as soon as her finger points toward you. With advance thought, you can wring maximum results from your focus time.

When you have trouble figuring out what to do next, make a diagram or fiddle with your written plan. If you're genuinely at a loss, use a random die roll to choose your next course of action. Sometimes you'll roll, get a result, and decide there's no way on Earth you're going to do that: A random roll might provoke you into making the correct, non-random choice.

5. ENJOY THE PEANUT GALLERY

You'll rarely encounter a problem so puzzling that you can't spend most of your off-screen time kicking back to enjoy the exploits of the other PCs. It's fun to sit back and allow yourself to be an audience member for a while. Predicaments that would make you cringe if your character was present often become hilarious fun when they happen during another player's scene. Sometimes you'll get caught up in the suspense as another PC faces down a dangerous situation.

Your DM will probably let players who aren't in the focus toss in the occasional suggestion or smart-aleck comment. If you lob in your ideas and jokes with a certain amount of restraint, they'll add to the fun for everyone. Remember, though, that there's a difference between adding the occasional comment and grabbing the steering wheel. If your suggestions become too detailed or overbearing, the DM will remind you that you're not there, cutting you off. Never tell the focus player what to do! If your funny comments are too frequent, or not amusing enough, expect to get shushed. Subtlety is your best weapon here: If you take things easy, you can help out your fellow players, earning their gratitude. They'll want to help you with good suggestions when you're in the spotlight and stuck for a course of action. But if you've annoyed them by overdoing the kibitzing, they'll be just as disruptive as you were during their scenes. Create a situation where they'll want to give the odd bit of good advice, and the DM will feel permissive enough to let you use it.

6. CROSS THE STREAMS

One of the best-selling novelists of the 1970s was a writer named Arthur Hailey, whose books, including *Airport* and *Hotel*, often relied on a surefire narrative gimmick. He introduced large numbers of characters at the beginning of each thick tome, and then gradually wove all of their stories together into one big climactic event. The gimmick builds anticipation in the reader as we wait for the disparate threads to weave themselves together.

A cutaway game provides some of the same sense of satisfaction when storylines that seemed to be separate turn out to be connected. Your DM might or might not have already thought up ways for the various PCs' stories to connect. You can advance your own cause by finding links between the stories and piecing them together—you might even be making connections the DM hadn't anticipated!

The easiest way to cross the streams is simply to seek out a PC engaged in a parallel storyline and offer to swap favors with him. You'll help him with a task that advances his agenda in exchange for his assistance in a matter that furthers your goal.

You might also notice, having watched another player's scenes, that something in your storyline pertains to his. You can use this to merge the two plot threads into one—but, first, you must learn the fire wall trick.

7. TUNNEL UNDER THE FIRE WALL

DMs who never use the cutaway trick sometimes try to segregate information from players based on what their characters might know. If something happens that you're not supposed to know about, you get banished temporarily from the room. That would be boring in a game where you spend only a portion of the game in an active scene. A cutaway DM lets the other players react to storylines they're not involved in as audience members. In exchange for this freedom of information, you have to agree to separate player knowledge from character knowledge. If, in play, you use a piece of information your character wouldn't have, you can expect to be cut off by your DM with a quick, "Uh-uh. Arville wouldn't know that." She'll disallow any action taken based on information you've gotten as a spectator. Unless, of course, you know how to be subtle about it. Don't try to break through the fire wall; tunnel under it.

Have your character do things that are perfectly in tune with his goals and the knowledge available to him, but that take advantage of what you learned as a spectator. Give him an independent course of action that nonetheless ties into another storyline.

For example, you've watched Belgar's story, and know that the librarian he talked to is probably a powerful lycanthrope. He's searching for a sarcophagus containing the mummified remains of a werewolf demi-god. You're helping Filjo get the monks out of his manor. You decide to involve the monstrous librarian in the manor story. You go to the library and ask the librarian if he knows anything about the "mysterious mansion just outside the city." When the scholar's hairy ears perk up and he asks if there might be a crypt beneath the manor, Arville picks up on his interest and leads him on. Arville's actions won't be overruled by the DM because he's not explicitly relying on your knowledge of the librarian's sarcophagus quest. Everything he's done is in character and in keeping with what he ought to know. Nonetheless, you've managed to get a mighty creature interested in helping you clear the monks out of Filjo's place, a possibility so entertaining that your DM will have to allow it.

Note that you are never obligated to cross the streams in a way that helps your fellow players. Belgar might not be at all happy when he shows up with a silver blade to drive through his enemy's heart, only to find Arville serving as the librarian's willing bodyguard.

8. TAKE NOTES

As you can see from the example above, cutaway games get more complicated than a standard adventure in which all the PCs cooperate. There are more sub-plots to keep track of, and after a while, they all start to interweave. While players who take notes always do better than ones who don't, you'll find it a special advantage in cutaway play.

9. GET READY FOR THE CUT

Your DM will most likely give you somewhere between 10-20 minutes in the spotlight and work to give the other players equal time. However, she'll also learn to heighten suspense by cutting away from scenes during cliffhanger moments. After a while, she'll vary the rhythm so that some scenes are much shorter than others. In doing so, she maintains the session's energy, just as a film editor does with a movie.

If you really feel that you're getting somewhere in a scene, you might be frustrated when the DM switches her focus to another player. If you remember that she's doing this to keep everyone entertained, you'll find the adjustment easier.

You can also learn to play the cut to your advantage. Sometimes you need the thinking time or feel pressured and want a breather. Let's say you're in the middle of a tense negotiation with the werewolf librarian. He seems to be getting the better of you. You know that the DM cuts away whenever the tension of a scene seems to be peaking or draining away. So if you stall for a bit, you can "force" the cut, encouraging her to switch to someone else. Now you have time to think up some better lines of argument to use on the lycanthrope, before he decides you'd make a superb lunch.

Tying It All Together

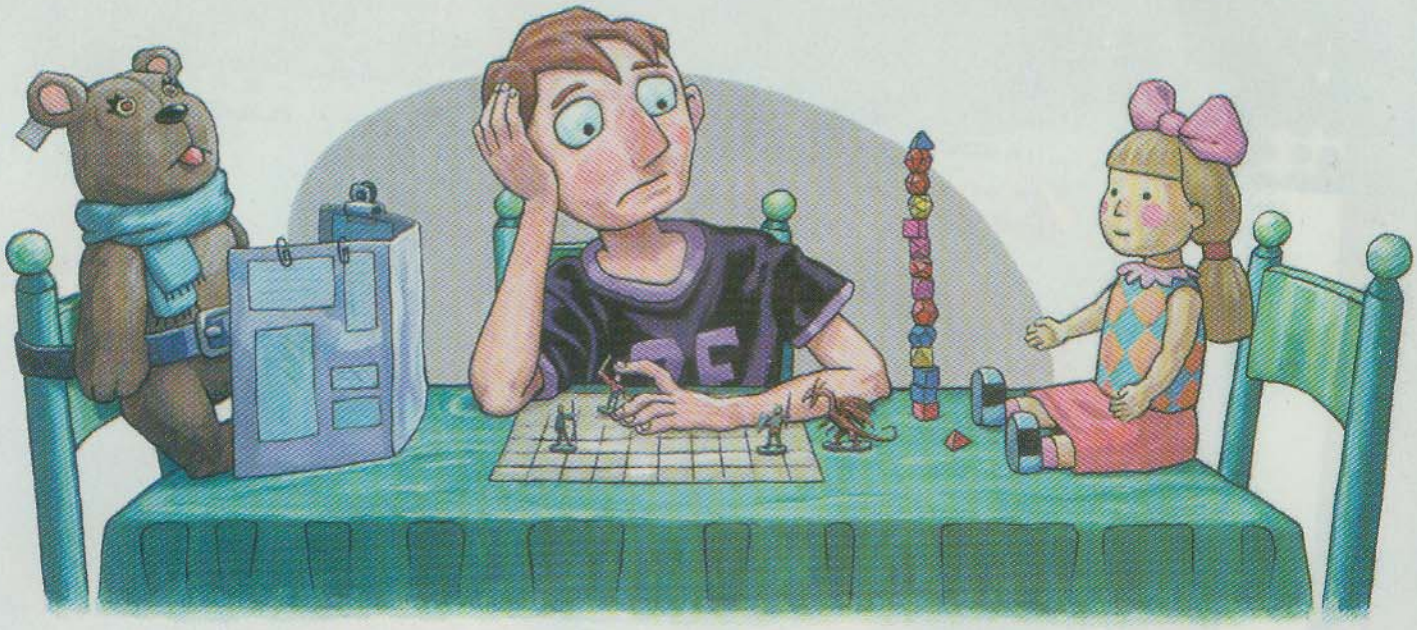
Now you've figured out what your DM is up to when she uses the cutaway technique and armed yourself with the tricks you need to make it work for you. All you need to do now is wait until the next session. When the spotlight hits you, you'll be ready for your close-up.

SHE'S BACK

All trademarks, including character names and their distinctive likenesses, the ⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕ symbols, and the pentagon of colors, are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©2001 Wizards.

MAGIC The Gathering®
Seventh Edition™

Get a sneak peek at:
WIZARDS.COM/MAGIC



D&D PERSONAL ADS

by Tony Moseley • illustrated by Tony Moseley

Jake was an average guy—somewhat smart, somewhat likable, somewhat a lot of things. Every week he and a few other gamers gathered around a dining room table and enjoyed a few hours of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Jake ran an elven fighter named Moonpie who, like Jake, was always completely surprised by any disaster in his life.

On this particular evening, the Dungeon Master began the session with the usual group of adventurers standing just outside the ruins of an ancient temple. Judging by the architecture, the temple's deity either had an inordinate fondness for beetles or was a beetle himself. This was pretty standard D&D fare—not at all unusual. It certainly did not foreshadow the disaster to come.

Moonpie quickly spotted a zombie deep within the temple. The creature thoughtlessly lumbered along in the usual zombie fashion, as if it had cement blocks tied to its feet. Moonpie pulled out his trusty sword and charged.

Once Moonpie had covered more than half the distance, however, he discovered that he had made a serious mistake about the zombie: It was a lich. And it wasn't lumbering along; it was stomping beetles. (The DM imparted this revelation with the stuttering voice of someone whose plans are proceeding perfectly.)

Surprised to encounter a lich only 5 minutes into the session, Jake jumped to his feet—completely forgetting that his legs were crossed. His knee banged the table, knocking over one of the miniatures, the one used by the DM for his NPC paladin, Nokwell.

Everyone's face went pale—especially Jake's. The DM had painted this figurine entirely under a microscope, making it the most detailed, awe-inspiring miniature on earth. Gary Gygax, who had six months earlier flown halfway across the country in a solar-powered helicopter to admire it, had proclaimed the figurine "a polychromed sculpture worthy of the Guggenheim."

Seeing his marvelous handiwork toppled, the DM flopped his head sideways in sympathy. Jake seized the opportunity and grabbed at Nokwell, thinking that if he uprighted it quickly enough, the DM might forget what he had seen. Instead, Jake knocked the masterpiece from the table. The DM, his eyes having never left Nokwell, screamed as though his thumb had been slammed in a car door.

No one moved a muscle as the trembling DM recovered the figurine from the linoleum floor. Holding Nokwell like a wounded hummingbird, he extended his hands over the table. Everyone gasped at the horror cradled in his palms. Nokwell's longsword was bent at a 90-degree angle to the hilt.

Jake assured the DM that if the sword was straightened really, really slowly, it would be as good as new. The DM took a deep breath and slowly began straightening the sword. Though the noise from the neighbor's lawnmower rumbled in the room, everyone heard the tiny snap of the sword breaking completely from the hilt.

Following several failed attempts to reattach the sword with glue, the session continued. The lich immediately *polymorphed* Moonpie into a rare species of jellyfish that, true to its nature, spontaneously disintegrated because it was not submerged under 500 fathoms of saltwater. Jake's request to roll-up another character was denied. The DM explained that all the remaining playable characters in his world were already NPCs.

Thus, Jake became a gamer without a group.

A GAMING GROUP is never a permanent thing. People move away, lose touch with their friends, and get replaced by alien clones. These things happen. If you ever find yourself without a gaming group, and you might—if you have not already—do not despair. Instead, make yourself a D&D personal ad using the guidelines in this article. (If you skipped Jake's story, the gist of it is this: People will read anything if they think it is about naked women.)

Losing a gaming group is not limited to players, of course. Dungeon Masters can also lose a gaming group (although it's less tragic for DMs because they get to keep all the campaign material). Whether you are a DM or player, though, a D&D personal ad is a great way to locate fellow gamers.

D&D personal ads are a lot like the more common personal ads found in newspapers. D&D personal ads, however, are written on index cards, not printed in newspapers. They are also thumbtacked to bulletin boards inside stores, not thrown onto porches. Aside from that, and the fact that D&D personal ads target gamers, not people looking for dates, they are very similar.

The best stores for displaying your D&D personal ads are gaming stores, followed by those hobby stores and comic book stores that carry D&D products. All these businesses attract roleplayers like dragon hoards attract adventurers. You might also get results from ads thumbtacked onto college campus bulletin boards.

If you have already seen a few of these D&D personal ads, you probably think the idea sucks. After all, most of those ads consisted of only a name, a list of games, the number of years spent gaming (maybe), and a phone number, and that's not much to go on. For one thing, it puts too much weight on handwriting analysis ("Hmm, his printing is small and precise, so he's probably a rules-lawyer"). But those inadequate ads were created without the benefit of this advice, so it's no wonder they sucked. By following the design principles described in the Ten Guidelines below, however, any gamer can design an effective D&D personal ad.

THE PROCESS

To create an ad, you need a pack of index cards and a pen or fine-tip marker. Index cards are usually sold in packs of a hundred, so you can make lots of mistakes and still have plenty of cards to distribute. If you are making too many mistakes, however, switch to a pencil and eraser until you have everything the way you want it, then make the copies in ink. A D&D personal ad should be a thing of beauty: no scribbled-out words, no misspellings, no foul language, and handwriting as neat as possible.

When shopping for your index cards, be sure you get the "ruled" kind, not the blank kind. There should be ten lines total on each card: one red line and nine blue. Each of these lines has a special function corresponding to one of the Ten Guidelines, so do not purchase a brand with too many or too few lines or you won't be able to create a proper ad.

Every index card should measure 3 × 5 inches; this is the traditional format for D&D personal ads. Do not use the larger 5 × 7-inch index card. Not only does it have too many lines, many store managers will discard any advertisements larger than 3 × 5 inches from their bulletin boards. One manager explained this policy to me, saying, "If a size restriction was not imposed, people would use larger and larger formats until somebody eventually covered the entire bulletin board with a single poster-sized ad, totally ruining the cork-based forum for other patrons."

As if that was not reason enough, another reason to avoid the 5 × 7-inch format pertains to fear and suspicion. Some people are genuinely upset by any card larger than 3 × 5 inches. When I asked a stranger what she would think if she saw a personal ad written on a 5 × 7-inch index card, she said, "What kind of pervert would use a card that big? Get the hell away from me."

I also recommend that players use only white cards for their ads, leaving DMs the option of using colored cards. This simple restriction might cause a DM who is reading a player's personal ad to think, "Ah, this player has written her D&D personal ad on a white card, not a colored card, which should be used only by DMs. This player obviously would be an asset to my campaign."

Once you have the correct index cards, you must decide if you are a DM seeking players or a player seeking a DM. You cannot be both in the same ad. The reason is a little paranoid, but here it is: Some DMs would not welcome a rival DM into their gaming group, and some players are suspicious of the commitment of a DM who also wants to run a PC. So make up your mind (you can always change it later).

After the Ten Guidelines have filled your ad with information, you might consider adding a small drawing of a sword or helmet or something like that to your ad, assuming your ad has an empty space. A simple picture could make your ad outshine a similar ad next to it. You might even start over and draw the picture first, then copy the text around the picture.

If your ad fails to get results, redesign it and post the new version in more locations. Keep repeating this process until your ad is successful.

IF YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF WITHOUT A GAMING GROUP

DO NOT DESPAIR.

THE TEN GUIDELINES

LINE 1: The What I Want Line

This line is where you convey the purpose of your D&D personal ad. Anybody who reads this line should know right away if you are a player or a DM. For example, "Gamer Seeks Gaming Group" or "DM Seeks New Players" are both typical examples of what should appear on this line. Do not shy away from writing something more snappy, though. Grabbing somebody's attention might compel her to read the rest of your ad, even the boring ninth and tenth lines. For example: "Experienced Roleplayer Available," "Gamer Hungers for Adventure," "DM Recruiting Players," or "Dungeon Master Wants YOU!" are all much more exciting. Do not get too snappy, however. Titles like "Sexy Player Available Evenings" or "DM Loves Inexperienced Munchkins" might get you arrested.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

D&D PERSONAL AD

1 WHAT I WANT LINE

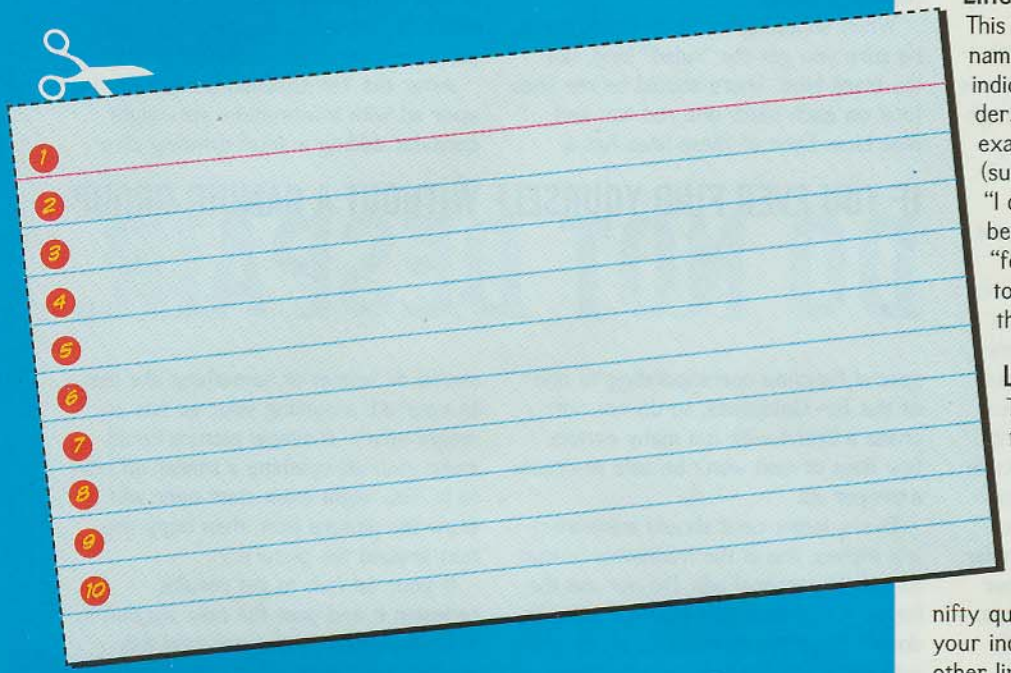
Good: Player Seeking Hack-n-slash Thrills

Bad: Someone To Love My Halfling

2 BIOLOGICAL DATA LINE

Good: Male, Late-Twenties

Bad: Older and Smarter Than Ten of You



3 CREATIVITY LINE

Good: (ornamental line in sword and skull motif)

Bad: Smears of sticky brown liquid

4 PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE LINE

Good: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, 5 years

Bad: Barbie's Beach House, 32 years

5 CONTRIBUTION LINE

Good: Will Bring Snacks

Bad: Will Bring Mom

6 AVAILABILITY LINE

Good: Every Friday, 7 pm to midnight

Bad: Fourth Thursday of every other month, 4 am to 5 am.

7 EXCLAMATION LINE

Good: Fast-paced and non-stop!

Bad: Help me pop this zit!

8 MULTI-PURPOSE LINE

Good: Ready to Game

Bad: No Longer Contagious

9 HOW TO REACH ME LINE

Good: 555-2412

Bad: Jack in the Box

10 WHEN TO CALL LINE

Good: Weekday Evenings

Bad: October

In very small letters at the end of line 1 write "posted" and the day's date, then draw a rectangle around it. Some stores require this detail so they can remove ads after a certain number of weeks have passed. Leaving off the date might cause a store employee with awful handwriting and a thick, black marker to date your ad for you.

Line 2: The Biological Data Line

This line should contain your first name, your last name or initial, some indication of your age, and your gender. Age can be indicated exactly (for example, "17 years") or approximately (such as, "late teens," "almost 20,"or "I can drive a car!"). Gender should be limited to writing "male" or "female." A female gamer might opt to underline "female" and skip lines 3 through 8.

Line 3: The Creativity Line

This line should be filled with anything imaginable. You can write down your favorite movie, you can leave the line blank, you can fill it with a decorative pattern—whatever you want.

This line also has an additional nifty quality: It can float up or down on your index card and insert itself between other lines, displacing the lines below. In effect, this allows you the option of adding an extra line of information to any single line. This might prove very useful when designing your ad, as a single line can get filled-up pretty fast. If none of this makes any sense, just write, "I am a people person."

Line 4: The Previous Experience Line

This is where you communicate what role-playing games you have played and for how many years. Because of space limitations, the only game that should be written on this line is DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, and you need not specify whether it was Basic or Advanced, or which edition. Conclude the line with the number of years spent gaming on all RPGs combined. If you absolutely must mention a different RPG, like one in which your character was a pirate or a cowboy, just add an "etc." before writing the number of years. For example, "I've played DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, and so on, 4 years."

LINE 5: The Contribution Line

This line is where you name something extraordinary that you can contribute to a gaming situation. Such as, "I have 1,000 miniatures" or, "I add numbers very quickly in my head."

LINE 6: The Availability Line

This line is where you state the hours and days that you are regularly available for gaming. Be sure to include exceptions. For example, "Available Sundays, 12-8 PM, except the second Sunday of the month, then 2-8 PM." You might need to place the Creativity Line after this line if your schedule is complicated.

LINE 7: The Exclamation Line

This line is where you exclaim something about DUNGEONS & DRAGONS or gaming in general, or what you like or dislike in a campaign. End your sentence with an exclamation point; otherwise, you are not being emphatic enough. This line is especially important to anyone reading your ad, so think about your statement for at least 2 minutes before you write it down. Good, passionate lines from players are:

"I love dungeon-crawling!"
"I hate hack-and-slash!"
"I crave a campaign with a realistic economy!"
"I want lots of treasure!"
"Halflings? Bah!"
"Dice! Dice! Dice!"
"Please don't kill my PC!"

Useful lines from DMs are:

"I never fudge die rolls!"
"I have great house rules!"
"I run GREYHAWK!"
"I created my own campaign world!"
"I have memorized everything written by Ed Greenwood!"
"I devour PCs like candy! Bwa-ha-ha!"

LINE 8: The Multi-Purpose Line

If you are creating your D&D personal ad as a player, then you would use this line to claim some degree of reliability in attending gaming sessions. This is an important matter; after all, when a player regularly misses gaming sessions, it undermines the cohesion of the group, inconveniences everybody, and generally messes things up. Possible statements are: "I will not miss gaming sessions," "I will attend an average of three out of four gaming sessions," "I am always punctual," "I am never more than 30 minutes late," or, "I'll be moving to Idaho next Thursday."

A DM, on the other hand, should offer a tempting bit of information concerning the first potential adventure. For example: "Come explore the caves of Doomfang," "Your adventure begins in the Kingdom Of G'nek," or, "Your PC sees what appears to be a zombie . . ."

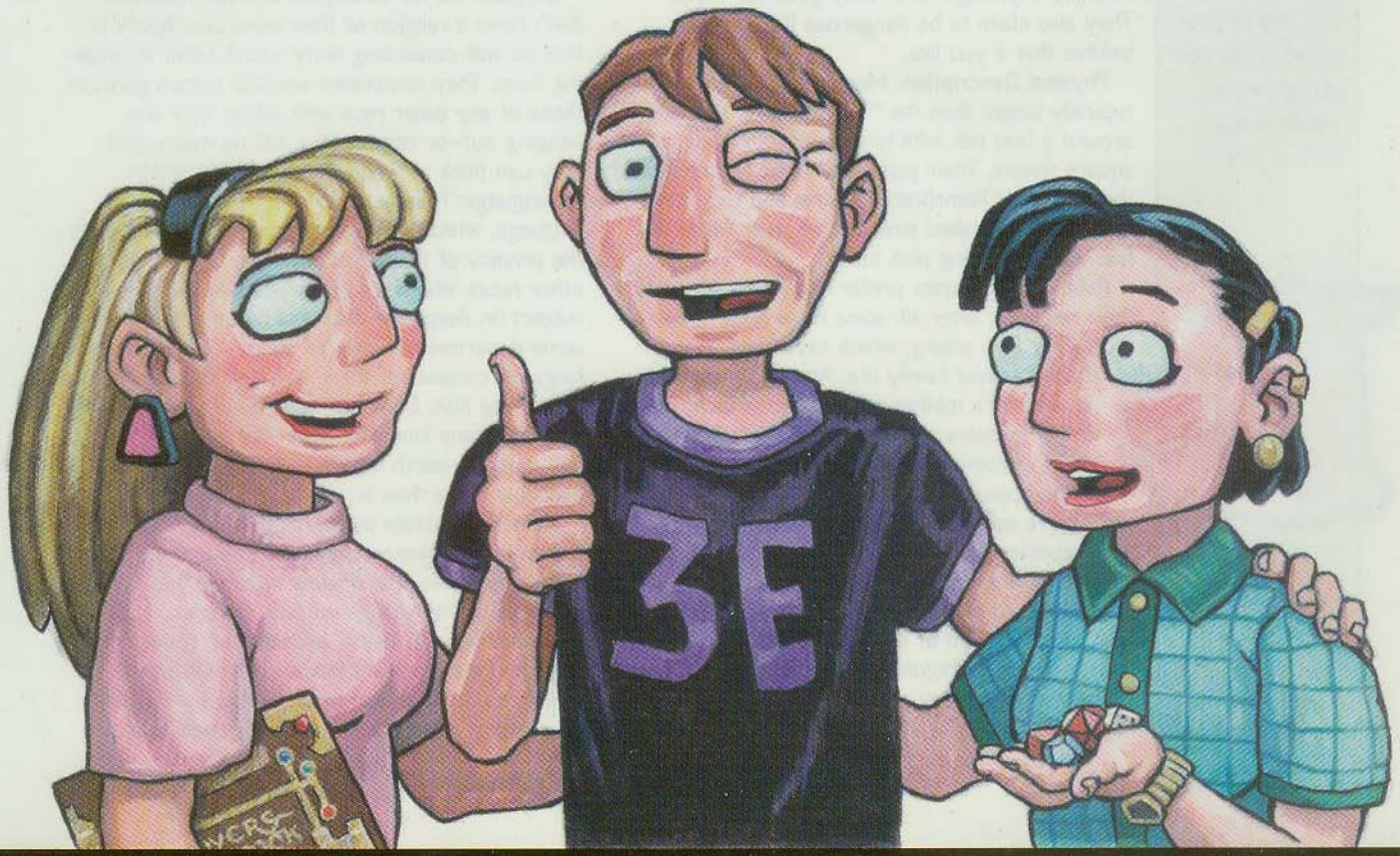
As a variation on this, you might simply name a particular DUNGEONS & DRAGONS product that will be used for the first adventure. For example: "I will be running the *Forge of Fury* module."

LINE 9: The How to Reach Me Line

On this line you should write your phone number, your email address (if you have one), and your city or town. If you do not know where you live, consult a map.

LINE 10: The When to Call Line

This is where you write what times are best for people to call, and if they should leave a message. Regardless of your schedule, even if you work at home and can answer the phone all day long, never provide the readers of your D&D personal ad with more than a 4-hour daily window in which you can be reached. Writing that you are home more than 4 hours during the day will give people the impression that you are not interesting.



HEROES OF THE UNDERDORK:

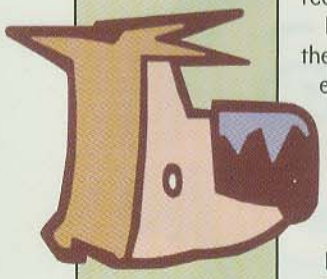
THE MUSKRAT

by Phil Masters • illustrated by John Kovalic

NOTE

Muskrats were common in the 2nd Edition D&D game, but they managed to keep their existence hidden.

Unfortunately for them, we found their lair, thanks to a trail of used coffee grounds leading into a secret complex hidden beneath Greyhawk University's Delta Upsilon Delta house. So now they can be presented in the new edition's terms . . . whether they like it or not.



Muskrats are described in books as rat-like, semi-aquatic rodents, with compact, heavy bodies about 12 inches long, dark brown fur, scaly tails, and webbed hind feet. (Their pelts are important to the fur industry, and they are technically edible, but it's not really polite to talk about such things here.) However, none of that has anything much to do with their role in fantasy games.

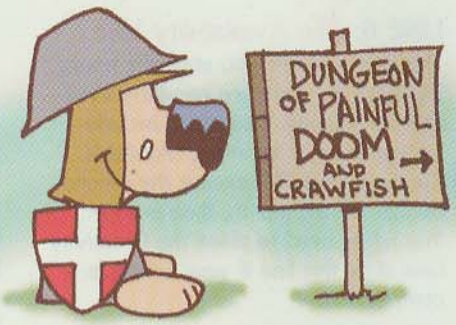
Muskrats don't actually have much of a society of their own; they have small burrows, or mounds of reeds in lakes or pools, in which they bring up their litters of young. In other words, a muskrat's home life is damp, crowded, and involves eating a lot of roots (uncooked). This probably explains why some muskrats occasionally go haywire, stand on their hind legs, and start trying to hit things with spears and swords, albeit rather diffidently. This article deals with that sort of muskrat, not the sensible ones who stick to molesting crayfish with their teeth.

Personality: Muskrats enjoy long walks, romantic dinners, foreign films, and getting caught in the rain. Well, so they say, anyway. In truth, they like weird games, strong black coffee, and moderately violent movies with simple plots. They never seem to enjoy anything that's really good for them. They also claim to be dangerous if crossed; believe that if you like.

Physical Description: Muskrat adventurers are typically larger than the "wild" variety, standing around 3 feet tall, with large heads and long, square snouts. Their pelts tend to be lighter than those of their homebody cousins, and they have large areas of naked pink skin on their faces and feet as well as long pink tails.

Relations: Muskrats prefer not to talk about their relations; after all, some have been known to eat their own young, which says quite enough about muskrat family life. Anyway, a muskrat adventurer's mother usually seems incapable of any conversation beyond asking when it's going to come home and marry a nice muskrat of the opposite sex.

If you're asking about how they get on with other species—well, muskrats have this problem with being taken seriously by anyone. Most associate with motley groups of adventurers who tend to be tolerant of anyone they can use as cannon-fodder, dragon-bait, or a battering ram. Unsurprisingly, many muskrat deaths are friendly fire related.



Alignment: Muskrats are rarely downright evil, although some of them try. Many people think that they're invariably chaotic, but actually they're just incompetent.

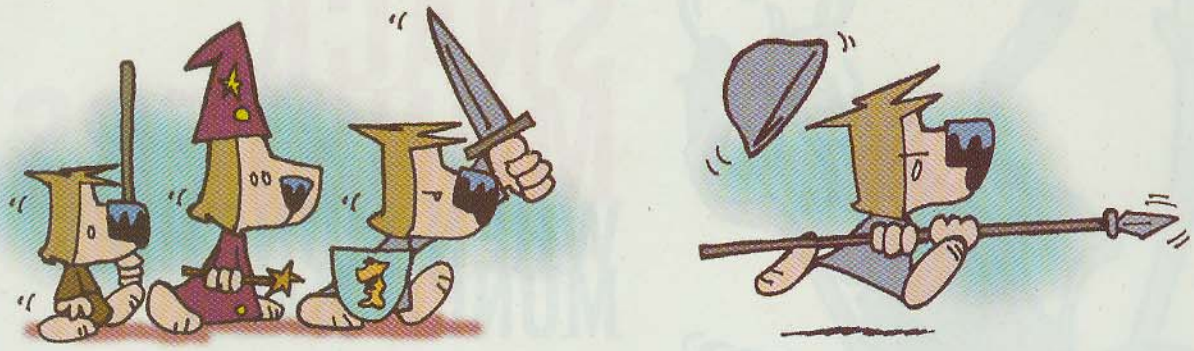
Muskrat Lands: As noted above, muskrats like to make their homes near water. Although they live in burrows, they try to get more fresh air than most underground races. After all, the alternative is to stay in a hole with a load of other muskrats.

Muskrats encountered in human lands are typically waiters, unsuccessful small businessmen, or long-term students. There are at least a few in the lower levels of almost every line of work (except, oddly, the fur trade).

Religion: So far as anyone can tell, muskrats don't have a religion of their own; one theory is that no self-respecting deity would admit to creating them. They sometimes worship human gods, or those of any other race with whom they are hanging out—or rather, they call on every god they can think of when they get into trouble.

Language: Muskrats claim to have their own language, which is terribly secret and used only in the privacy of their own burrows. Scholars of other races who have spent years studying the subject (in desperate attempts to earn tenure in some department, however minor) claim that this language consists of three irritated squeaks and a despairing hiss. Even muskrats don't claim that they have any kind of written literature. Certainly, any muskrat worth talking to will speak Common, probably more than is wise.

Names: Muskrats usually have a single name drawn from a human language, often resembling a human surname. It is unclear whether these actually pass down through muskrat families, or whether they are simply adopted for convenience when the muskrat first has to deal with people. (Muskrats at home can probably get by with a squeak that means "me," another squeak that



means "you," and a despairing hiss that means "any other muskrat.") Muskrats looking for human-style names to use tend to take them from advertisements, off-color jokes, and the labels of medicine bottles.

A few muskrats have several names, but consecutively rather than concurrently, as they keep changing them to stay ahead of irritated former colleagues.

Male Names: Carstairs, Jonson, Shawleigh, Target, Renfrew, Bob.

Female Names: Kylie, Britney, Mel, Emma, Victoria, Geri.

Family Names: Usually a despairing hiss suffices.

Adventurers: Given everything mentioned above, is it surprising if some muskrats sometimes abandon all this stuff and take to careers such as warfare, con-artistry, or the theft of valuable property from sentient beings who happen to live underground? They are rarely very successful in such professions, and even if they are, it doesn't earn them much respect from other muskrats, but anything has got to beat living in a hole in the ground and eating roots.

Muskrat Racial Traits

• -2 Strength, -2 Constitution, -2 Wisdom, +2 Charisma. Don't expect any favors here. Muskrats are just small furry animals with valuable pelts that nonetheless go out adventuring. However, they are sort of cute, for all the good it does them. (Somehow, people seem to acknowledge this more than the smell.)

• Small: As Small creatures, muskrats gain a +1 size bonus to Armor Class, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, and a +4 size bonus on Hide checks. (Frankly, muskrats need all the help they can get, and the slightly smarter ones are fairly good at hiding.) They should, in theory, use smaller weapons than humans use (though they sometimes forget this and are forever wandering around with darned great maces and longswords and heavy lances and warhammers and stuff), and their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters of those of Medium-size characters (which is something they don't usually forget).

• Muskrat base speed is 20 feet.

• Muskrats are theoretically aquatic creatures. They receive a +6 bonus on all Swim checks and if they are not wearing armor they have a swim speed of 30 feet. (But many muskrats would rather have their spleens removed without anesthetic than take advantage of this; they left home to get away from all that swimming nonsense. In fact, one aquatic dragon of a mad-doctor-ish bent has a fine collection of muskrat adventurer spleens in jars to prove this.)

• +4 racial bonus to attack rolls against anything resembling crayfish and immobile shellfish such as mussels. For what it's worth, muskrats have an innate talent for dealing with the sort of thing that represents their natural diet. (If they ever have to fight water-plant roots, they get the bonus against those, too.) This is another talent that many muskrats would sooner die painfully than exploit.

• Post-Mortem One-Liner. Muskrats might die easy, but they can at least make some comment about the fact when it happens, usually with a sort of pathetic irony. It's not much of a racial talent, but hey, it's theirs.

• Automatic Language: Common. (Oh yes, and muskrats also know those three squeaks and a hiss.) Bonus languages: Gnome and Halfling. As fellow small burrowing creatures, muskrats sometimes encounter these races underground. Admittedly, this often leads to nothing but a short brawl, after which both parties stalk off in a huff pretending that nothing happened, but it does help if they have some shared language. (Muskrats, halflings, and gnomes are forever dragging each other off to law-courts to resolve property rights, squabbles over planning applications, and underground boundary disputes. These cases can drag on for years and never end happily.)

• Favored Class: None. Muskrats who try to get clever by pursuing a broad range of specialized training invariably come to a sticky end. Most seem to become fighters, and a few seem hell-bent on pursuing the life of a barbarian to its inevitable painful conclusion, but it's not like they're actually especially cut out for this stuff.

(Thanks to Aaron Williams and the Dork Tower mailing list for additional research on this subject. Now, go clean up those coffee grounds, please.)

SNACK MONSTERS

WHEN MUNCHIES MUNCH BACK

by Mike Mayer

illustrated by Brian McLachlan

Gamers, more so than most Medium-size vermin, like to eat. Heck, most gamers can't *not* eat when sitting down at a table. So what's wrong with that? Well nothing, so long as the food remains in its proper place. But more often than not, some careless dolt spoils the mood of the adventure by dropping a potato chip among the otherwise lovingly arranged miniature figures representing the climactic battle between good or evil. Or some cretin dribbles cookie crumbs onto the Fortress of Styrofoam Doom at the exact moment the Pit Fiend Air National Guard soars into view.

A Dungeon Master can eliminate these problems by banning snacks from the gaming area, but this is shortsighted. Why not roll with the punches and use the situation to one's advantage? If your players insist on annoying you by dropping snacks onto the table, annoy them right back by turning these snacks into monsters. Suddenly, the Oreo that knocked over the cleric isn't so funny now that it's trying to suck him into its creamy white center. Who'll be the laughing when that fallen pretzel begins to knot itself around the ranger? And how tasty is that Snickers, now that it's taking a bite out of the bard?

Below are some common snack food items "fleshed out" with monstrous abilities. So take heed, players. Next time you insist on bringing snacks to the gaming table, pause a moment to consider what you're getting yourselves into. Don't set drinks where you might knock them over. Use a napkin. Wear a bib if you must. And above all, chew with your mouth closed.

PIZZA SLICE (the works)

Gargantuan Triangulant
Hit Dice: 37d12+370 (610hp)
Initiative: +2 (usually in thirty minutes or less)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 42 (-4 size, +36 crust)
Attacks: Cheese +34 melee, pepperoni +20 ranged
Damage: It'll set you back about three bucks
Face/Reach: 30 ft. by 20 ft./20 ft. (see below)
Special Attacks: Ooooh, so many special attacks
Special Qualities: Immune to antacid attacks
Saves: Fort +30, Ref +20, Will +27
Abilities: Str 38, Dex 10, Con 31, Int 14, Wis 24, Cha 18
Skills: Drip +14, Grease Fingers +15, Hide Disgusting Toppings +12, Stain +22, Ooze Silently +11
Feats: Always Land Cheese Side Down, Armor Proficiency (cardboard), Burn Roof of Mouth, Stick to Carpet, Stick to Cardboard

Climate/Terrain: Flat boxes and college dorms
Organization: Solitary or in "pies" of eight
Challenge Rating: 25
Treasure: Coupons good toward your next treasure
Alignment: Lawful cholesterol
Advancement: 38-76 HD (Thick Crust); 77-111 HD (Deep Dish)

The pizza slice is the red dragon of snacks. This horror is armed with blistering-hot pseudopods of mozzarella, razor-sharp levitating disks of pepperoni, snapping gargantuan anchovies, various poisonous fungi, and—in its most hideous incarnation—pineapple. Its favorite tactic is to use its wedge shape to divide and conquer. Pizza slices are accompanied by a large pepsioid (see below) 80% of the time.

Combat

Mozzarella (Ex): The pizza slice attacks all enemies within 20 feet with cheesy pseudopods. A successful hit deals 2d8 points of burn damage. The cheese acts as a powerful glue that mimics a mimic's adhesive (see *Monster Manual* pages 135-136 for details). Trying to flee a pizza slice while glued to it is a really bad idea. A large patch of cheese breaks off and envelops the coward, holding him immobile for 1d4 rounds while causing 3d8 points of scalding damage each round.

Pepperoni (Su): A pizza slice sports 1d4 disks of pepperoni. Pepperoni fly about at will, slicing up this and that with the ferocity of a powersaw blade. A successful ranged attack by the pizza slice deals 2d10 points of damage. A confirmed critical with a pepperoni attack severs a victim's head or limb.

Anchovies (Ex): 1d4 of these ghastly fish swim about the pizza slice's gooey surface and attack all within reach. An anchovy's statistics mirror those of a Medium-size shark (see *Monster Manual* page 201 for details).

Fungi (Su): 2d8 violet fungi (see *Monster Manual* pages 93-94) grow atop the pizza slice, ready to fall off at a moment's notice and harass the nearest adventurer.

Pineapple (Su): Roughly 10% of pizza slices come with pineapple (shudder). Pizza slices with pineapple force their prey to make a Fortitude save (DC 32) or become panicked and run away screaming—as they damn well should—losing everything they carry, including their lunch.

GUMMI BEAR

Medium-size Ursaooze
Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16hp)
Initiative: +1 (Bounceability)
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 14 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 cuteness)
Attacks: 2 paws +6 melee, gummi gum munch +1 melee
Damage: Paws 1d4+4, gummi gum munch hysteria
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5ft./5ft.
Special Attacks: Gummi clump, gummi gum munch
Special Qualities: Smells nice
Saves: Fort +0, Ref -3, Will +10
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 17
Skills: Floor empathy +3
Feats: Gummi Will

Climate/Terrain: Not too hot; not too cold
Organization: Solitary or in clumps (2-16)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: Just knowing them is treasure enough
Alignment: Neutral as a Swiss druid during World War II
Advancement: Rumors of even larger bulk sizes

Combat

Gummi bears (or "gummies" as adventurers-in-the-know call them) come from the elemental plane of gummi, a happy place stuffed with half-molten sweeteners where nothing much happens and everyone sticks together. The "bear" is the preferred shape of these peculiar but adorable creatures, but they are also known to take the form of worms, frogs, and South Carolinian senators named Strom.

Gummi Clump (Ex): Gummies come in many different colors, but they all fight the same. They amble forth with fixed expressions and try to convince their enemies to step on them. Those foolish enough to do so must make a Too Stupid For Words (or Will) saving throw (DC 14) to avoid becoming ensnared in a gummi clump.

Being trapped in a gummi clump is a lot like being trapped in a web, except you can't breathe. Refer to the *web* spell for penalties. Follow the rules for drowning to see how long a trapped individual lasts without air. Anyone attempting to physically extract someone from a clump risks becoming "clumped" as well, so why bother? A gummi engaged in a clump is at its happiest and refrains from action unless directly attacked.

Gummi Gum Munch (Ex): Unclumped gummies will attempt to deliver their dreaded gummi gum munch. They like to go for the neck, feet, or anywhere ticklish. Victims failing a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) collapse to the floor and laugh hysterically for 1d4 rounds or until they give the Dungeon Master 5 dollars.

Clerics can attempt to turn gummi bears, but since most gummies don't know if they're coming or going, it probably won't do much good. It is rumored that a great gooey gummi god lords over these delightful bags of gelatinous sugar, but let's hope not.

LURKING DORITO

Large Triangulant
Hit Dice: 7d10+21 (59hp)
Initiative: +50 (no one gets the jump on a lurking Dorito)
Speed: 10 ft. or plummet 20,000,000,000,000 + 1d4 ft.
AC: 6 (Tex-Mex Dex)
Attacks: Hug +7 melee, 3 pokes +2 melee
Damage: Hug 2d6 subdual damage, poke 1d10
Face/Reach: 10ft. by 20 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Bestow orange fingers, improved grope
Special Qualities: Does it matter?
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +7 (isosceles Dorito only)
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 3, Con 16, Int 3, Wis 16, Cha 10
Skills: Attract Pets +4, Be Pointy +9, Hide in Cushions +12
Feats: Weapon Focus (poke), Great Fortitude (but only after three months of exposure to air)

Climate/Terrain: Behind throne cushions
Organization: Solitary or in handfuls (1d6)
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: If you find any, let us know
Alignment: Largely Republican
Advancement: Check your local retailer.

The lurking Dorito is a relative of the recently discontinued lurker above. Due to a horrendous ecological policy ("Eat all you want, we'll make more"), lurking Doritos were also nearly driven to extinction, but then a new slogan was adopted and they are making a strong comeback. However, they will never forget their mistreatment at the hands of gamers and take every opportunity to fall upon the unaware and devour them.

Combat

With a successful strike, the lurking Dorito wraps its manta ray-like wings about its target and squeezes the loving-stuff out of it, causing 2d6 points of subdual damage and automatically grappling the target. Escaping the lurking Dorito's fins requires an opposed grapple check.

Those escaping the hug, or standing around like idiots, can expect to be poked. The lurking Dorito can poke up to three adventurers per round. One out of ten adventures are said to enjoy it. Adventurers who do not enjoy being poked can attempt a coup de grace attack, provided they can pronounce it correctly. This won't kill the creature, but it breaks off one of its corners so that it can't poke with it anymore. However, 10% of the time, this attack breaks the corner so that it creates two functional points.

Bestow Orange Fingers (Ex): Those attacked by lurking Doritos are covered with orange lip marks. It's disgusting really, but tasty if you lick it off.

Improved Grope (Ex): Those who fail to escape the lurking Dorito's grappling hug automatically take 2d6 points of subdual damage each round from the lurking Dorito's improved grope attack.

When combating a lurking Dorito, covering your eyes provides an imaginary three-quarters concealment bonus—unless one possesses Blind-Fight and then all bets are off. The lurking Dorito is immune to triangular weapons. Piercing weapons cause only half damage when held by the wrong end.

It is rumored that lurking Doritos come in a milder "cool ranch" variety, presumably named because they hang around farms up north.

JOLLY RANCHER (watermelon)

Medium-size Oozelementamagical
Hit Dice: 4d10+36 (58hp)
Initiative: -5 (sticks to all surfaces)
Speed: 15 ft.
AC: 5 (-5 Dex)
Attacks: Slam +1 melee
Damage: Slam 1d6+4 and 1d6 watermelon acid
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Watermelon acid, break teeth
Special Qualities: hardness 15, sour face freeze, reflect spells
Saves: Fort +5, Ref -4, Will -4
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 1, Con 28, Int 2, Wis 2, Cha 16
Skills: Attract Debris +14, Stick +15
Feats: Static Reflexes

Climate/Terrain: Here and there
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 4
Treasure: 50% lint, 20% you don't want to know
Alignment: Translucently evil
Advancement: One size fits all

This close relative of the gelatinous cube is said to be the lovechild of a demonic geometry teacher and a ripe bit of fruit. The Jolly Rancher (incidentally, it's not the least bit jolly) scours corridors and cavern floors for God knows what, absorbing gunk, junk, and funk into its rectangular form.

Jolly ranchers and gummi bears are archenemies, so don't invite both of them to your birthday party.

Combat

Break Teeth (Ex): In combat, the jolly rancher has an utterly unimaginative way of slamming into its enemy that is quite like having a brick wall run into you. Victims must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or lose a tooth.

Engulf (Ex): Jolly ranchers are able engulf their prey in the same manner as a gelatinous cube. Refer to the *Monster Manual* page 146 for details.

Sour Face Freeze (Su): In addition to damage caused by the Jolly Rancher's sour watermelon acid, an adventurer failing his Will saving throw (DC 15) involuntarily puckers until his face

resembles an aged jack-o-lantern. Paralysis sets in immediately, and there's not a lot one can do except use the poor bastard as a scarecrow. A *wish* or an *add sweetener* spell sets everything right.

Reflect Spells (Su): Spells cast at a jolly rancher have a 10% chance of being reflected back at the caster. Fully 5% of reflected spells are magnified. Increase their range, area, and damage by 10 feet.

PEPSIOID

Regular-Size Carberration
Hit Dice: 6d10+24 (57hp)
Initiative: -5 (Dex)
Speed: 10 ft., climb 10ft.
AC: 4 (-1 size, -5 Dex)
Attacks: Slam +5
Damage: Slam 2d4+3 and 1d4 fizzy acid
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./10ft.
Special Attacks: Fizz, sugar rush
Special Qualities: Acquire endorsements, disguise (mistaken for the "real thing"), Pepsi generation
Saves: Fort +4, Ref -3, Will -3
Abilities: Str, Dex 1, Con 18, Int 6, Wis 4, Cha 14
Skills: Dry to Sticky Mess +20, Destroy Stereo +10
Feats: Melt Ice, Induce Toxic Breath Weapon

Climate/Terrain: Never in your favorite restaurant
Organization: Solitary, packs (6), half-cases (12), or cases (24)
Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: Check under cap. You might be a winner.
Alignment: Exuberantly capitalist
Advancement: 7-12 HD (Biggie); 13-18 HD (Super-size)

The pepsioid glides across most surfaces with the ease of poop through a goose. It slips through cracks, sweeps beneath doors, and squirts through the tiniest of places. It closely resembles the Maxwell House Coffeestial, but unlike the M.H.C., its alignment is far from being good to the last drop.

Combat

Each round of combat there is a cumulative 1% chance the pepsioid will go "flat." A flat pepsioid just lies there—not attacking, not moving, and not fizzing. Basically, it's waiting to die. Adventures might finish it off, but doing so leaves a bad taste in their mouths.

Fizz (Ex): A pepsioid making a successful attack causes slam damage as well as 1d4 fizzy acid damage to any creature with a stomach. Cows take 4d4 points of damage. This acid eats through most anything, causing 50 points of damage per round to wood, metal objects, and nutritionists.

Milwaukee sages speak of an offshoot of the pepsioids known as "milk-and-pepsioids." But since that's too disgusting to contemplate, we won't.

Sugar Rush (Su): Upon sensing an enemy, the pepsioid often (75% of the time) makes a sugar rush attack. A sugar rush attack follows the same rules as a bull rush attack, but instead of pushing a foe backward several feet, a sugar rush attack forces an opponent to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) to avoid clutching his head and crying like a little girl. This effect lasts for 1d6 rounds. After the effect wears off, the victim acts as if under a *haste* spell for the next 20 minutes. The target then must sleep for three days or go insane.

Pepsi Generation (Su): Non-magical weapons striking these beasts initiate a process known as "pepsi generation." In 1d4 rounds, 1d4 new full-strength pepsioids spring out of the original monster and attack.

Aquire Endorsements (Su): Pepsioids have the supernatural ability to acquire endorsements. This ability works as a *charm person* or *charm monster* (depending on whether you're a lawyer or a person) spell. Those falling under the charm speak only well of pepsioids and do their best to convince others of how much more exciting their lives would be if only they would accept pepsioids into their hearts. D

POSSESSIONS

What is a necromancer's greatest desire?

BY ELAINE CUNNINGHAM

ILLUSTRATED by DARREL RITCHE

SOMEONE WAS CHANTING. The sound was distant, dreamlike, as if filtered through deep mist. Yet the power in the chant was undeniable; each word pushed at the darkness that had inexplicably engulfed Noor.

She struggled toward awareness like a dreamer who knows herself a player in some unpleasant drama of her own making. Finally she shook off slumber, only to find herself floating over a slender, raven-haired girl who lay, face down and arms outstretched, before a shining altar.

A sharp stab of fear sent Noor reeling back, flailing at the empty air and kicking wildly in a vain attempt to gain footing. She hit the wall behind her, hard enough to bounce away. None of this shattered the oddly lingering dream. Disoriented and deeply puzzled, Noor gazed about in search of clues to her present state.

The girl on the floor was young and willowy, with hair the glorious blue-black common to Ghalagar nobles. She was clad in scarlet and black—a necromancer's colors, colors Noor had recently taken to wearing despite her father's objections. So this girl, this supplicant, must be her. Noor accepted that. But why was she floating here, looking down at her own body?

Her gaze swept the room. The walls and alcoves and altar were fashioned of a rare blue-veined marble that resembled fine opals. Silver chalices stood on marble pedestals, and an elusive hint of incense filled the room. A tall priest stood over Noor's body, chanting as he waved a wand that leaked blue smoke. He was robed in white vestments, and the silver circlet on his brow marked him as a high priest. Noor expected no less, for this was the chapel on her family's ancestral land.

Understanding came to her in a sudden bright flood. The chanting was a prayer, requesting a vision from Mystra, Lady of Magic. Family custom demanded a mystic journey, a threshold that must be passed before a wizardly apprenticeship. This detachment from herself, this strange, floating experience, must be part of her vision.

It was odd, though, that she remembered so little of what had come before. Odd, too, that she and the priest were alone. The Ghalagar clan always gathered to see fledgling wizards on their way.

Noor studied her prostrate form. She was dressed for rough roads, and her feet were shod with boots rather than her customary jeweled slippers. Most of the rings on her outstretched hands looked unfamiliar, but that was not so surprising. Gifts from her once-indulgent father and numerous suitors were so plentiful that she had chests full of jewels never worn. She did, however, recognize the large black-and-red circlet on her left thumb. Carved from obsidian and set with a giant ruby, it was a deathwizard ring.

So that was why her father had not come!

Anger, black and bitter, welled up in Noor's heart. She embraced it, for it was less painful than the sting of rejection. Granted, necromancy was the least regarded of Halruaa's nine Arts, but she could not understand her father's aversion to her chosen path. Wealth, lineage, and beauty were already hers: Noor aspired to power. Toying with the hearts and

WEALTH, LINEAGE, AND BEAUTY WERE ALREADY HERS:

pride and honor of her suitors was a fine diversion, but as a necromancer, she could possess their very souls and hold life and death in her bejeweled hands!

The chanting grew louder as it gathered magic from the Weave that sustained and connected all. Noor's heart pounded in cadence with the quickening power. She threw back her head and laughed with anticipation, not caring that her astral form made no sound.

She could not have been heard, regardless. The priest's chant had risen in power until it engulfed the room, until it became too large for a human voice to contain. The chant tore free of the priest and bore down on her like a hundred thundering hooves.

The magical onslaught swept her away. For a moment Noor was a leaf in a gale—utterly, terrifyingly adrift. Then unseen hands caught her and pulled her with a single wrenching tug back into her prostrate body.

Noor came to with a gasp. She pushed herself up onto her hands and knees, feeling dizzy and unaccountably heavy.

The priest knelt before her. Gentle fingers cupped her chin and raised her face to his. "Lady Noor?" he inquired.

Dark eyes, kind and concerned, searched her face. The priest's touch held the familiarity of long acquaintance, but his face was that of a stranger.

Panic fluttered through Noor's belly. She turned her head sharply aside to remove her chin from the priest's grasp and rose unsteadily to her feet.

"Lady Ghalagar," she corrected in cold, regal tones—a voice that one of her suitors had likened to an ice sculpture honed by generations of wealth and privilege. "I am ready for my journey."

A small, sad smile ghosted across the priest's face. "Yes, I can see that you are. Welcome back. Your boat has been prepared and provisioned."

She darted a quizzical look at him. "Boat? Why so?"

"Your journey will take you to the Confluence," he explained. "It is a place of great power, where the warp and weft of Mystra's Weave—"

Noor cut him off with a single imperious gesture. "Who are you to instruct me on my family's history? I know my destination, priest. I also know that the paths to the Confluence have been dry throughout my lifetime and yours."

He averted his eyes. "The River Ghalagar has overflowed its banks."

This news set her back on her heels. The river that rioted down from the Lhairghal peaks was a slow and sedate thing by the time it reached her family estates. It brooded its way through ancient woodlands and emerald-green horse pastures with an air of resignation, finally to disappear into the Swamp of Ghalagar. Never in her life had the river overflowed! How could this have happened and she not remember?

Noor quickly moved past the shock to consider the implications. If she needed a boat to reach the Confluence, it was entirely possible that swamp creatures had made their way through the floodwaters to that magical place.

Her lips curved in a feline smile. The swamp was a cauldron into which life disappeared, simmered, and rose again in unexpected ways. Few travelers were equal to the swamp. Noor could think of no better place to test her fledgling powers.

Suddenly the priest's concern took on new meaning. Noor's chin went up, and her cheeks burned with insulted pride. "You think I will fail," she stated coldly. "You consider the challenges ahead beyond my skills."

She thrust out her hand so that the ruby in the Deathwizard ring caught the torchlight and glowed like a malevolent eye. "I earned the right to wear this ring and to wield the powers it holds!"

Noor glared at him, silently daring him to curse her, as her father had done. Deathwizard rings were rare and precious. The price was always high, and it was always paid in blood. This one had cost Noor her father's favor, her virtue, and the lives of three good men. She counted it a bargain.

The priest's gaze faltered before her furious challenge, and he bowed his head. "This is your threshold, Lady Noor. The decision to pass through or turn aside belongs to you and no other."

She gave a curt nod and strode purposefully from the chapel. The door swung open as she approached, creaking, as she had never remembered it doing, as if its magic were somehow tainted by the priest's reluctance. Then Noor's gaze fell on the garden, and all other thoughts fled. She stopped so abruptly that she had to seize the doorframe for support.

The chapel garden had been all but swallowed by the floods. Trees that had provided fruit and shade were hunched over like old men, and the courtyard's bright mosaic paving had been reduced to an indecipherable jumble of cracked and faded tiles. Once a broad sweep of marble stairs had led to sunken gardens that were the pride of her family and the envy of their neighbors. Now, the steps disappeared into murky water, and their marble was cracked and begrimed with green scum. A servant stood in knee deep water, holding the rope that secured a shallow skiff.

Noor's gaze slid over the small craft. The prow rose in a graceful curve, but the boat itself was broad and low-sided and nearly as flat as a barge. It skimmed like a water bug, barely dimpling the surface. She let out a small sigh of relief. At least one thing was as it should be! Such boats were commonly used during monsoon season to travel through swamplands and flooded fields, moved by spells so simple that nearly any Halruaan child could cast them.

She allowed the servant to hand her into the boat. After settling down, she fixed in mind her desired destination and began the easy, singsong chant of the spell. The boat glided steadily toward the Confluence. Noor held her head high, not permitting herself to look back at the chapel, or at the blighted landscape ahead.

Her resolve soon faltered. She turned this way and that, gazing in open horror at the changes wrought by storms she could not remember. Ancient, barren trees loomed overhead, moss draping the skeletal branches like a moldy shroud. The air became heavy, fetid. Large bubbles simmered free of the murky water, and the deep, grumbling calls of swamp creatures came from all around her.

A giant dragonfly darted past, so close that wings of rainbow gossamer brushed Noor's face. She shied violently away, shoving her fist into her mouth to muffle her startled scream. Showing fear could be deadly, for the dragonfly's touch was far from accidental. The creatures fed upon carrion and soon-to-be carrion. It had "tasted" her and decided that she was not yet near enough to death to be of interest. Or perhaps it had recently feasted on the storm-provided bounty.

Noor closed her eyes, trying not to imagine the bloated bodies of drowned horses. Her father's breeding farms lay near the chapel. She did not wish to see what had become of those sleek, fleet animals nor watch the dragonflies gather in feeding frenzy. She had seen such a thing once. They had gathered as thick as horseflies, their brilliant colors shimmering like obscene flowers in a breeze as they reduced a rothe cow to bone.

A frustrated sigh escaped her. The monsoons that fueled such flooding must have been fierce, yet she could remember nothing of it. No doubt the ritual left her confused. Her memory would surely return once the threshold journey was complete. If it did not, she would have that wretched priest flayed alive and use his hide for boot leather!

Suddenly the boat lurched to the port side. Noor slapped her hands against the low sides to keep from tumbling off her seat. But the boat continued to tip, the starboard side moving slowly, heavily up. Noor threw herself onto the boat's floor and braced her feet against the port wall. The skiff rose until it stood upright on its side, then continued its path until it leaned ominously over the dark, hungry water. Finally the boat stopped, quivering like two strong wrestlers locked in combat, too evenly matched to prevail and too stubborn to cede victory.

Noor clung desperately to the seat to keep from falling. "You'll never capsize me!" she shrieked at her unseen foe. "My father's magic protects the boat!"

"And you, as well?" inquired a dry, mocking voice. "I don't think so, little deathwizard."

Shock numbed her, silenced her. Noor had spoken out of bravado, never expecting a response!

"Speak up, girl! A well-bred lady does not stand about gaping like a carp."

A second wave of dread shivered through Noor. She had heard these words before, many times, scolding and prodding her throughout her childhood and toward "proper behavior." The voice had been leeched of tone or pitch, but there was no mistaking the crisp, exaggerated precision of the words. Well-bred ladies were, above all, articulate.

"Grandmother?" she whispered.

"Hanish Ghalagar hates deathwizards," the voice continued. "So give me the ring, little deathwizard, and go home. Perhaps he has not yet forgotten you."

"No!" The word tore from Noor in a rising scream, fueled by terror and fury and denial.

The boat slammed back down. Fetid water splashed over Noor, and the jarring impact sang down her spine like a banshee's wail. She gritted her teeth against the pain and rolled aside.

Just in time. A skeletal hand reached over the side. Bony fingers screeched against wood as the hand groped about for its prey.

Noor scuttled away from her attacker. Oddly, curiosity outweighed fear. If this undead thing had indeed been her grandmother, why could it speak? How could it remember? Her grandmother had been an imposing matriarch but not much of a wizard. The spells that transformed a dying wizard into an undead lich were far beyond her meager skills.

NOOR ASPIRED TO POWER.

"Who gave you this power?" Noor demanded.

A second hand grasped the edge of the boat. Bony fingers flexed, and then a skull rose above the side of the boat. The famous Ghalagar hair was gone, replaced by limp strands of seaweed. Empty eyes regarded Noor above sharp, aristocratic bones.

"Deathwizard," the skull moaned. There was an eternity of sorrow in that word, yet the jawbones still moved in a manner that ensured ladylike annunciation. And then they shattered into a thousand pieces as crimson lightning flashed from the ring on Noor's hand.

Noor stared at the wisp of fetid smoke, all that remained of the skeletal wizard. She glanced at her left hand. Still clenched in a fist, it was thrust out, twisted so her thumb pointed toward the attacker. Crimson fire still smoldered in the deathwizard ring.

"Worth the price," she whispered, adding the destruction of her undead ancestor to the cost of the ring. She took a long, steadying breath and then renewed the spells that sent the boat gliding over the dark water.

The mist steadily deepened as Noor neared the Confluence, closing around her until she could not see past the prow. She was therefore startled when her boat grated against stone and ground to a halt.

At that moment a strangely cold wind blew though the swamp. The mist parted to reveal a tall black tower, a wizard's tower, built upon the very point of the Confluence.

After a moment of stunned silence, Noor rose to her feet, shaking with wrath. This was her land, her inheritance! She climbed out of the boat, too angry to puzzle over the fact that she stepped out onto dry land.

A pair of fierce gargoyles guarded the door—gray stone carved into demons with elven ears and heads crowned with writhing snakes. Unimpressed, Noor looped the mooring rope around a flexed stone talon. Balling her fist, she pounded on the tower door.

It swung open immediately to reveal a comely young man

clad in the crimson robes of a necromancer's apprentice. A practical color, by Noor's estimation, for only a few damp spots and a faint coppery smell betrayed the blood that stained his garments. The lad gave her a friendly, open smile and a courteous greeting, and offered to take her to the master. Disarmed and curious, Noor followed him.

The room through which they passed was round and vast—much larger than the exterior of the tower had suggested possible—and it bustled with activity. A dozen red-robed apprentices hurried about, carrying sharp implements or shallow bowls brimful of blood. Cages stood about in no apparent order, filled with creatures that Noor had never before seen.

That no one had seen before, she realized. She looked about with real interest as she followed her escort through the teeming chaos. Along one wall was tethered a line of centaur-like creatures, human torsos rising from the bodies of strange and mighty beasts. A sudden wind buffeted her as they passed a young griffin that baited its wings tentatively, its eagle-like beak moving as it muttered to itself in a plaintive, very human voice.

An excited smile burst over Noor's face. She had heard of such things—combining forms, transferring the life force of one creature into another body. This was necromancy at its most exciting!

"What is he doing?" Noor asked, nodding toward another crimson-clad youth. The young man stood on a stool, using a long wooden paddle to stir the contents of an enormous cauldron. Apprentices came and went, pouring thick red sludge into the pot.

"Cats," the apprentice said cheerfully, pointing to the sludge. "The jungles are teeming with them. We're rebuilding a man with a cat's muscles. Measure for measure, cats are ten times as strong as men, and far more quick and agile."

As Noor watched, a human skeleton rose from the thick and fetid soup. Chains linked its wrists to handles on either side of the cauldron. The skeleton fought against its bonds, writhing as if to shed the alien flesh that slowly gathered upon its bones.

"Reverse decomposition," Noor said slowly. She had heard of such a spell. It was exceedingly difficult, and obviously painful. But when the process was complete, what a servant the necromancer would possess!

She considered her grandmother's final word in this new light. Perhaps that final, whispered "deathwizard" was not a taunt but an answer to Noor's question. Most likely her grandmother's remains possessed speech and memory not because of any magic the woman had once claimed but through the power of the wizard who had raised her!

The apprentice gestured to a tall, black-robed man who stood with his back toward them. He was reading a massive book that floated before him. "The master," he said simply. He bowed to Noor and left her.

She took a deep breath, trying to reclaim some of her indignation. "Lord wizard," she called as she stalked toward him.

He turned, and something in his gaze stopped Noor in midstride. His was a striking face, graced with fine features and framed with an abundance of glossy black hair. He might have been handsome but for black eyes as soulless as a shark's.

Nevertheless, Noor met his gaze. "You are trespassing upon Ghalagar lands, my family home. This tower was raised in defiance of our ancestral claims, and against Halruaan law. "What have you to say to this?"

"I am Akhlaur," the wizard responded, as if that explained all.

As indeed it did.

Noor's heart thudded to a painful stop, then took off at a gallop like a bee-stung mare. The room tilted and spun wildly as she dropped to one knee before the greatest necromancer of their time.

"I am Noor, first daughter of Hanish Ghalagar. Your presence here lends my family grace, my lord, and I bid you welcome in my father's name."

A wicked glint sparkled through the wizard's eyes,

AS HE BEGAN TO CHANT, NOOR **CLOSED HER EYES**

proclaiming her words as the lie they truly were. Building a tower on another wizard's lands, especially in these dark and contentious times, was a challenge the Ghalagar family could not ignore. There was no way this could end but in war, and they both knew it.

Even as the thought formed, another path opened—one so bright and full of promise that Noor gasped with the wonder of it.

"My lord Akhlaur, it is my family's custom that every youth and maiden must pass a threshold. We journey to this place of power, seeking a vision from Mystra."

Akhlaur lips curved with dark amusement. "And I am the vision the Lady granted? Apparently she has developed a fine sense of irony since last we spoke!"

Noor rose to her feet quickly, before her courage failed. "We make this journey before taking vows of apprenticeship, to test our truth path." She held up her hand, and showed him the deathwizard ring. "It is my desire to learn the necromancer's Art. I am the Ghalagar heiress. If you accept me as apprentice, none will challenge your right to this place."

"Do you think I need such an alliance?" Akhlaur asked, more in curiosity than anger.

She dipped into a hasty curtsy. "Of course not, my lord. The advantage would be entirely mine."

The necromancer glanced at her hand. "You have a deathwizard ring," he stated. Without hesitation Noor stripped it off and handed it to him.

Akhlaur turned the ring over, studying the workmanship. "A princely gift. What did you do to acquire this ring?"

Noor told him.

The wizard seemed neither shocked nor impressed by Noor's candid recitation. Indeed, he seemed waiting for something more. Noor gestured toward the bustling activity. "You accept many apprentices, Lord Akhlaur. Take me, and I swear I will serve you as well and faithfully as any other."

He studied her for a long time, measuring her with his unfathomable black eyes. "We will see."

Abruptly he turned and strode through the vast chamber. After a startled moment, Noor followed. They passed through a back door and walked between rows of long, low buildings that looked rather like her father's stables. The floodwaters had receded here, and the ground was dry and

firm. Herbs scented the air, and flowers nodded in a gentle breeze. She knew some of them: purple monkshood and foxglove, shy maidens in shades of rose and soft coral, and delicate blue and white skitterbreeze. Deadly poisons all, despite their beauty.

The wizard paused before a stone building. "This is where my elves live," he announced, "and this, also, is where most of them die. If you've a soft heart or a weak stomach, speak now. I've no patience for tears and tantrums."

Though the building had no windows, though the door was stout and solid oak, Noor could hear the terrible screams that echoed through the building. "I am ready," she said in a voice that, even to her own critical ears, sounded admirably cool.

They passed through a stout wooden door into the shallow of hell. Noor kept her eyes focused on the necromancer's back, ignoring as best she could the wretched cells that lined both sides of the long corridor.

Akhlaur led her to a small, stone cell, and to the source of the agonized cries. On a small cot lay an elfwoman, hardly more than a girl, pinioned by wrists and ankles with iron chains. She writhed in the most horrific travail Noor had ever witnessed. Her coppery skin was beaded with sweat, and her belly, not yet rounded with full term, churned and buckled as if something were trying to fight its way out through her skin.

"I have not yet succeeded in bringing one of these to term," Akhlaur observed. "The creature is stronger than its host, but it will die as soon as it breaks free."

Noor swallowed the bile that rose in her throat. "What creature, my lord?"

"You have heard of the laraken?"

She nodded. They were creatures of legend, voracious monsters that haunted swamps and fed upon magic carried by unwary travelers. They were said to resemble floating yellow globes framed by a pair of fleshy tentacles. No living man had actually encountered one and returned with a trophy, but stories of sightings were told in the taverns, and children frightened each other by whispering the bloody tales.

"I summoned the laraken and used them as building blocks for a more interesting and powerful monster," Akhlaur said matter-of-factly. "And I believe I have found a way past this particular inconvenience." He illustrated this comment with a casual wave of one hand toward the dying elf woman.

Noor followed him down to the end of the corridor. In the last cell, an elf maid crouched in the corner, clad only in her own long, jade-green hair.

"Look at me, Kiva," the necromancer said, speaking in a tone other men might use to summon a hound.

Compelling magic thrummed through Akhlaur's voice. The elf's chin lifted, slowly and heavily, as if the force of her will was almost equal to the great necromancer's compulsion. The silent battle raged for several moments before its inevitable conclusion. The elf's head snapped back, and her gaze locked with Akhlaur's. Golden eyes burned in a small, angular face. The hatred in them was neither human nor sane.

The scalding heat of the elf's fury hit Noor like a physical blow. Instinctively she took a step back.

But Akhlaur's smile was almost proud. "This one has spirit! Even so, she would never survive the growth of the laraken spawn had I not forged a death-bond with her. I doubt there'll be much left of her after the laraken's birth, but while I live, she cannot truly die."

Noor let out a long, tremulous sigh. This was horrible, yet it was wonderful! This was precisely the sort of power she longed to possess. To hold servants in her hand, no matter what the task, until their usefulness was finished. For that matter, to have a link between her spirit and that of the master necromancer!

"A death-bond," she repeated wistfully. "That spell is not known to me."

The necromancer's gaze shifted from the captive elf to the ambitious noblewoman. "It could be," he said softly.

Something in his tone froze Noor's blood and prompted the calm, reasoned voices inhabiting the back of her mind to scream out warnings. Yet when Akhlaur reached out to her, she placed her hand in his. Nor did she pull away when he plucked a small, curved knife from the empty air and lowered it purposefully to her palm. As he began to chant, Noor closed her eyes and thought about the power that would be hers.

AND THOUGHT ABOUT THE POWER THAT WOULD BE HERS.

TIME PASSED, and the early twilight deepened the shadows of Noor's ancestral woodlands. She followed on Akhlaur's heel, as she had done a hundred times, and in her hands she carried an enormous crimson gem shaped like a many-pointed star and glowing, quite literally, with life.

The forest was strangely silent, but for the furtive, shuffling sounds of the hunting laraken. The monster foraged ahead like a hound scenting a trail. As Noor walked, the crimson gem grew brighter and brighter.

Noor steeled herself to confront the source of this gathering power. As she rounded the massive trunk of a bilboa tree, sunlight glinted off a perfect crystal form—an elf-shaped statue as transparent as water, and colder than death.

No matter how many times she witnessed this transformation—and she had seen it many times—it still chilled her that creatures could be snatched from life so quickly and completely that their absence left visible holes in the Weave. Yet she could not deny that this was precisely what Akhlaur had done. The laraken fed upon magic, draining it from every source it encountered, and passing this bounty along to its master. The life forces of countless elves had passed into the gem. Elsewhere in Halruaa, other dark servants and powerful artifacts added stolen magic to Akhlaur's storehouse of power. Soon, none would be able stand against him. The necromancer was on the verge of conquering all of Halruaa, and Noor's dream of power was coming near to fulfillment.

Even so, Noor was tempted to throw the glittering gem to the forest floor, just to see whether it could break—and, perhaps, to see whether the souls imprisoned within could be freed by such a mundane act.

She quickly brushed aside the impulse. Such thoughts occurred from time to time. Even as a child riding with her father, she occasionally wondered what might occur if she urged her horse to leap over a ravine. All people had foolish, fleeting notions. Only madmen acted upon them.

"It is enough for today," Akhlaur announced, gazing with

satisfaction upon the glowing gem. "We will return to the tower."

Noor glanced into the dusk-shadowed trees. "And the laraken?"

"Leave it," the necromancer said negligently. "Let it hunt and feed as it will."

"We are a good ways from the tower," she reminded him.

"What of it? If I require the laraken, you can summon it with a few words."

Noor nodded. The relationship between Akhlaur and the laraken was even more complex than the death bond that linked her to the necromancer. Magic flowed from the laraken to the wizard, but never once had she seen Akhlaur cast a spell upon the laraken. She suspected that he could not, though she had never once given in to the temptation to ask. That was yet another impulse to which only madmen yielded.

forward. He was nearly a head shorter than Akhlaur. His hair and beard were a soft brown, a pallid color by Halruaan standards. There was nothing in his face or garb to suggest power, and his hands were empty of weapons or magic. But Noor knew the name—she had heard stories of the wizard who was slowly bringing peace and order out of the killing chaos Akhlaur had created in his rise to power.

"I wondered when you'd get around to visiting," Akhlaur went on. His gaze slid dismissively over the battle-ready wizards, lingering for a moment on Hanish Ghalagar. "This is the best you could do? Transformation into mindless undead could only improve this lot!"

Noor's eyes darted to her father. His face darkened with familiar temper, and he lifted his wand to avenge this insult. Before Noor could shout a warning—whether to her father or her master, she could not say—light burst from Hanish's wand.

EELS WRITHED AROUND ITS HEAD LIKE THE SNAKES

She watched as her master deftly summoned a magical portal, a shimmering oval that caught the last long, golden rays of the sun. She took his hand when he offered it, and they stepped together over the bright threshold.

They emerged a few paces from the tower, to find the wizard's holdfast as silent as a crypt. Even the raucous birdsong from the surrounding forest was hushed.

Akhlaur's eyes darted to the crimson gem and narrowed with speculation. For a long moment he listened to voices that Noor could not hear.

"So he has found me at last," he murmured. Without explanation, he strode into the tower.

Noor followed, then stopped dead. By all appearances, a storm had swept through the tower. The floor was covered with a thick sheet of ice. Several of Akhlaur's apprentices lay dead in frost-shrouded mounds, while others stood trapped in ankle-deep ice. Stone guardian lay in piles of rubble. Magical treasures strewed the floor in scattered, broken bits. At least a score of wizards waited in somber formation, wands held like ready swords or hands filled with bright globes that coursed with the snap and shudder of contained power. Noor's gaze slid over them, then snapped back to a stooped, white-haired man. She moved closer, peering at the aged wizard.

"Father?" she murmured, not quite believing. Less than three years had passed since she entered Akhlaur's service, and when she had left Hanish Ghalagar had been a man in his vigorous prime. Her father had often warned that powerful magic exacted a stern price, and the proof of it was etched into his own face.

"Even now I am your father." Hanish did not speak aloud; subtle magic carried the words from his mind to his daughter's ears.

Even now he was ashamed! Noor's chin lifted. "Why have you come, Father?" she said loudly, with a precise articulation that even her grandmother might have envied "To free me? Or to kill me?"

Her tone was flippant; her question was not. Yet her master brushed it aside, dismissing both the Ghalagar patriarch and his estranged daughter in favor of his own interests.

"Well met, Zalathorm," Akhlaur said with a hint of amusement.

One of the wizards broke from the group and strode

It veered away from Akhlaur and streaked toward Noor like lightning to a lodestone, flowing into the crimson gem. Her black hair rose and writhed about her face as her father's magic coursed into the gem. Hamish's wand quickly spent itself, blackened, and withered to ash. Still the magic came, flowing until the hand holding the wand was little more than skin-wrapped bone. When at last the lightning ceased, a desiccated shell wrapped in the rich robes of Hanish Ghalagar fell lifeless to the floor.

Noor stared, too stunned to grieve, barely noticing that the crimson gem lifted out of her hands and floated over to Zalathorm. The wizard deftly caught the artifact.

"You cannot harm me with that," Akhlaur said, still with a hint of amusement in his voice.

"Nor you me," Zalathorm returned grimly. "With this gem, we entrusted our lives to each other's keeping."

The necromancer lifted raven-wing brows in mock surprise. "Why, Zalathorm! Take care, or I shall suspect you of harboring doubts about our friendship!"

"Doubts? I don't know which is the greater perversion: the use you have made of this gem, or the monster you made of the man I once called friend."

Akhlaur glanced at his apprentice. There was nothing in his eyes that acknowledged Hanish Ghalagar's death or noted the bitter tears streaking Noor's face. "Tiresome, isn't he?" he said with a sneer, tipping his head in Zalathorm's direction. "But what can one expect from someone whose family motto is 'Too stupid to die?' "

In response, Zalathorm lifted the gem with one hand and began to trace a spell with his free hand. Every wizard in the room mirrored his gestures.

Suddenly the tower disappeared in an explosion of white light and shrieking power. Noor's senses, keenly attuned to the Confluence, felt the rending tear as the tower was wrenched free of its moorings.

Noor fell to her knees, blinded by the sudden flash and shaken to the depths of her soul by the enormity of this casting. Powerful magic was as common in Halruaa as rain in summer, but moving an entire tower, a wizard's tower—Akhlaur's tower!—was an astonishing feat!

But to what purpose?

The white light faded. Noor blinked away the sparks that

danced and swam in her vision and struggled to focus upon her master. He crouched in guard position, like a master swordsman, his weapons a skull-headed scepter and an ebony wand. Noor knew the spells stored in these weapons, and understood that Akhlaur could hold off magical attacks for a very long time. Her gaze slid to the necromancer's face. A puzzled moment past before she understood his wild eyes, his twisted expression.

Akhlaur was afraid.

His darting gaze fell upon Noor's face. "The laraken!" he howled, brandishing his specter at the wizards who began to circle him like hunting wolves. "Summon the laraken!"

So that was why the wizards had moved the tower! Away from the laraken, they had hope of engaging the necromancer in spell battle without adding their magic to his! Indeed, they had somehow stripped the tower of its defensive magic. No spells poured from the powerful artifacts in Akhlaur's hands.

Noor's hands began to move, almost of their own accord, in the gestures of summoning. But her eyes drifted to the withered shell that had been her father, and then to gleaming gem that now held his magic.

And perhaps more than his magic. Akhlaur's elves had added their life force to the gem's power. Noor could not say with certainty what afterlife awaited a human wizard swallowed by the necromancer's greed.

An image flooded her mind, a vivid memory of her father leaning low over the raven-black neck of his favorite horse, racing over the emerald fields and laughing with joy. He had taught her to ride before she could walk, to love the freedom of a wild gallop over the vast lands that were her birthright. For a necromancer's power, Noor had betrayed both her father and her heritage. And how had he repaid her? Perhaps Hanish had sacrificed his magic and his life to wrest her from Akhlaur's hand. Perhaps he had only come to reclaim the family land. She would never know. She supposed it shouldn't matter—after all, she had made her decision.

Her hands faltered. The unfinished spell crackled through her fingers as her uncertain gaze swept the room. Several of the wizards had leveled their wands at her, ready to loose killing spells. But all of them looked to Zalathorm, who held up a restraining hand and studied Noor with eyes that were both sympathetic and measuring.

Your father," he said softly, "was a hard man, but a good one. He believed that magic carries a stern price. He came here to pay his daughter's debts."

Noor's eyes darted to the glowing gem in Zalathorm's hands, and then they filled with tears. For a moment she knew a terrible affinity to the trapped souls. Because of the death bond she shared with Akhlaur, she could never truly die while he lived.

"You will free them?" she asked in a ragged voice. He inclined his head in solemn agreement.

A ghost of a smile touched her lips. Noor began anew the gestures of the summoning spell, altering it slightly. She began to chant, intoning words of power she had learned at the necromancer's side.

The spell was an ancient casting, one that Akhlaur had employed in the creation of the laraken. Power crackled through the tower as the Weave shifted, opening a gate into another, very different place. A roar like that of an angry sea filled the air, and rising above it, a keening, vengeful shriek.

Magic exploded through the tower for a second time. The circle of wizards fell back, uttering cries of horror as they beheld the creature that appeared in their midst, stepping from a shimmering oval.

Noor held her ground. She had seen such creatures before, captured and tormented by the necromancer. This one had been part of the laraken's creation, no more willingly and nearly as painfully as the elfwoman who had birthed the monster.

The creature was twice the height of a man and as heavily muscled as a dwarf, and its fearsome body was covered with green-black scales. Eels writhed around its head like the

OF A MEDUSA, FRAMING A **HIDEOUS, ASYMMETRIC FACE.**

snakes of a medusa, framing a hideous, asymmetric face. The water demon—for such it was—shielded its glowing red eyes with taloned hands. Its gaze fell upon the necromancer. Hatred burned like hellfire.

"Akhlaur," the demon said in a grating, watery voice, pronouncing the word like a foul curse. It sprung, massive hands locked into rending talons.

The necromancer dropped his useless weapons and seized the creature's wrists. With preternatural strength he grappled with the demon, chanting defensive spells. Magic crackled like black lightning around the struggling pair. The writhing eels shrieked and flailed about in agony as they burned and withered. One by one, they fell limp to creature's massive shoulders like lank strands of hair. Fetid steam rose from the demon's body, and green-black scales lifted from its flesh like worn shingles. Too furious to understand its own death, the water demon moved Akhlaur inexorably back toward the gate.

The necromancer's hate-filled eyes sought Noor's face. He captured her gaze and jerked the demon's hand, pantomining a slashing motion.

Noor's head snapped back, and four burning lines opened her throat. There was no time for pain. Darkness slammed into her, and then a terrible sundering, as if her spirit were being ripped from her flesh.

THE DARKNESS GAVE WAY to thick gray mist. Even before her vision cleared, Noor knew that she was back at the Confluence—she could feel its power. Akhlaur's tower had also returned to its rightful spot, but it was ghostly, insubstantial. Through its misty form, Noor could see a mossy obelisk, nearly half submerged in swamp water.

Puzzled, she looked around. Water was everywhere, as it had been when she first arrived at the tower. Gone were the elves' prisons, the stables, the gardens full of flowering poisons.

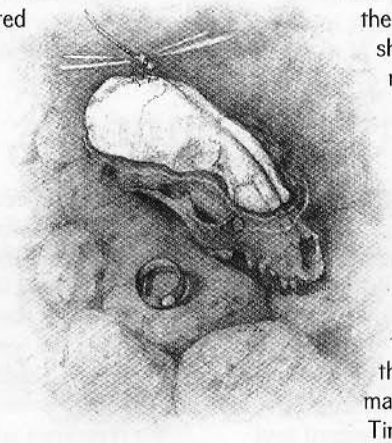
Noor stood in the barge that had brought her here, and she was not alone. A young woman, garbed in red and black travel clothes and wearing a fortune in Ghalagar jewels, stood less than arm's length away, staring at her with horror-glazed eyes.

For a long moment Noor gazed at a face very like her

own: delicate features, dark eyes enormous in a pretty face gone far too pale. Noor reached out to the girl, half expecting her to mirror the gesture. But the girl shrunk back, flinging out one hand as if to ward off a blow. She uttered a choked little cry as Noor's fingers grazed her small hand, and the deathwizard ring upon it.

Pain, unexpected and searing, flashed through Noor. She snatched her hand away. What matter of creature was this? Her flesh was hard as stone and burning hot!

The fleeting contact seemed to have the opposite effect upon the girl. Her face, already pale, blanched a whiter shade. She tore the obsidian ring from her finger, revealing a livid blue band beneath—skin as dead and frozen as the feet of fools who got caught in storms on the Lhairghal peaks. The girl's terrified eyes darted to Noor, and then to ghostly tower, which was swiftly fading away.



"It was a dream," she said in a faint, choked voice. "None of it was real!"

"Of course it is," Noor responded tartly, out of patience with mystery in general and this shrinking wench in particular. "You would deny the most powerful necromancer of our time?"

"Our time?" The girl's laughter was brittle, with a hysterical edge. "Akhlaur is long dead!"

A faint, nameless apprehension stirred in Noor's heart. "That is impossible. I am bound to Lord Akhlaur by a death bond. His death will be mine, and while he lives, I cannot truly die."

For some reason this only seemed to deepen the girl's horror. Then something else dawned in her eyes. Noor would have called it pity, but that was not an emotion people dared turn in her direction!

The girl collected herself with visible effort and pointed to obelisk. "This monument was raised two hundred years ago, in memory of a dark time and heroic ancestors."

Noor bristled. "Whose ancestors? This is Ghalagar land!"

The girl was silent for a long moment. "The swamp waters are rising. Powerful magic, you see, carries a stern price."

"I've heard tell," Noor said dryly.

"Family legend claims that when the obelisk is fully submerged, Halruaa will cease to be. Legend also claims that a spirit lingers here, weeping. Her tears mingle with the rising waters."

"What is that to me?" Noor said heatedly. "You speak of legends, and family, yet this has been Ghalagar land since the dawn of Halruaa!"

"It was Ghalagar land. The family name was changed, so that we would always remember the value of family and the price of magic. I never understood why until now," she mused.

"Changed? To what?"

The girl took a deep breath and met Noor's eyes. "Noor."

For a long moment Noor stood speechless. She could make no sense of this odd pronouncement, or of much else that had happened since she stepped into this barge.

Then it occurred to her that she was not in the barge but standing just above the surface of the water. Just as she had floated above this girl at the onset of the ritual.

So that was it, then. The battle in Akhlaur's tower had jolted her from her own body—which, inexplicably, was independent enough to resist the reunion. Fortunately, Noor had a necromancer's skill now, and a deathwizard ring. With such power in her possession, she would soon resolve the matter. She reached for the ring, but the girl shrunk away.

"You and I are one," Noor reminded her. She lunged forward, arms outstretched to embrace and engulf her material form.

The girl shrunk back, shaking her head in frantic denial. "Farrah," she gasped out. "My name is Farrah Noor, and no magic is worth such a price!"

So saying, she hurled the deathwizard ring into the mist and dropped down to huddle into the prow of the boat. Her blue lips moved in silent chant as she sped through the words to the enchantment. The boat began to move away from the Confluence.

Noor watched the skiff float away, skimming over the waters and leaving no sign of its passing. She noticed, without thinking it particularly odd, that her own feet did not even dimple the waters upon which she stood.

The skiff disappeared into the mists. Noor tried to follow, but her feet felt pinioned by the water. She struggled like one in a nightmare, unable to move, unable to flee.

Time passed. Noor could not say how much, nor did it seem particularly important to know. Exhausted by her struggle, she sank down at the base of the obelisk. Beneath her the water felt as firm as a dark, murky mirror.

Not completely dark, she noted. There, far below, was the ruby gleam of the deathwizard ring, glowing as it had when she fended off the undead Ghalagar matriarch. Noor's spirits lifted at the thought of possessing this treasure. As she studied the water, it seemed to her that the ring took on a richer hue, and that the light grew and splintered off into flowing fragments. Her excitement grew as the shards of light deepened and focused, revealing not one ring, but several!

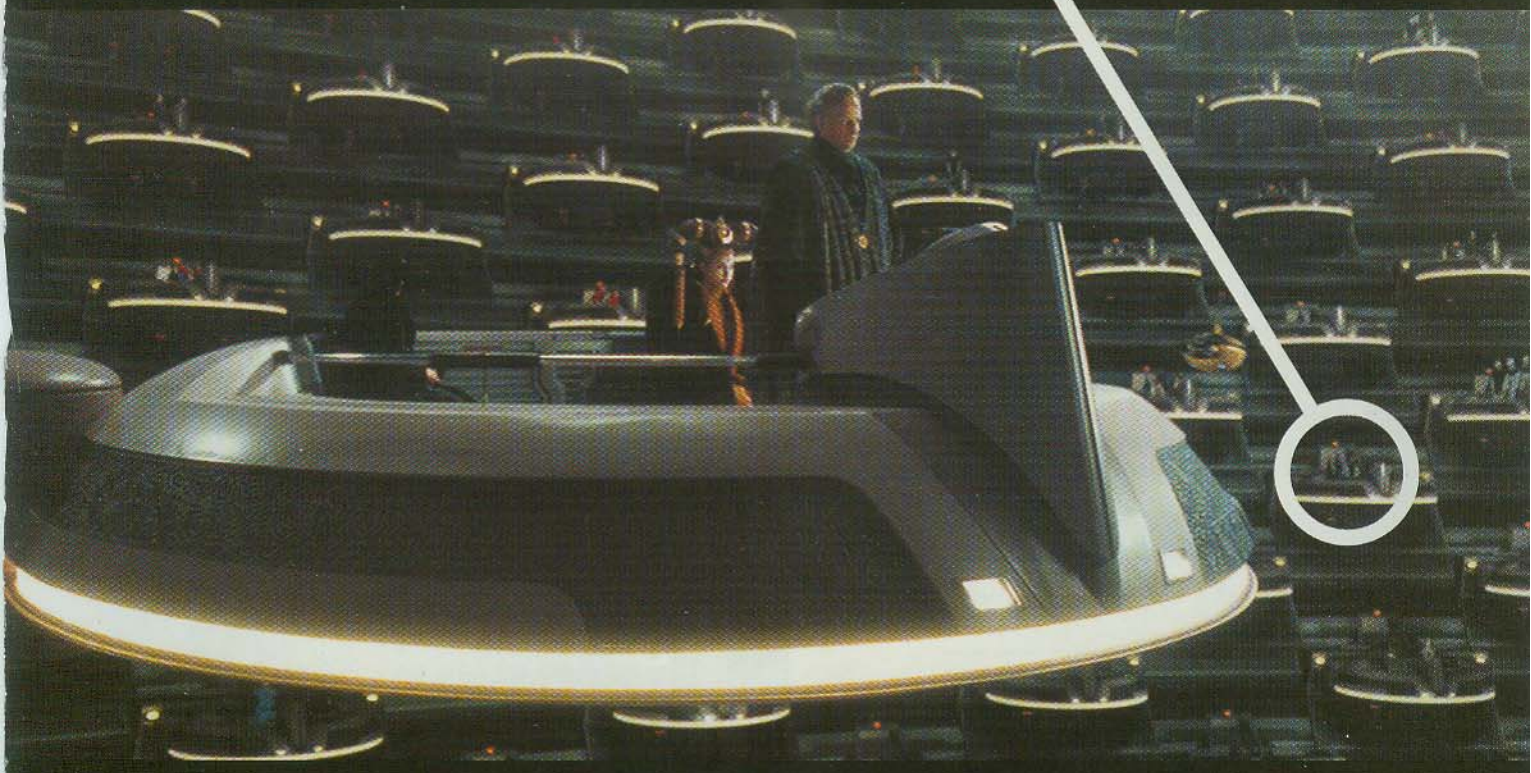
She let out a little crow of triumph. It was a rare necromancer who owned more than one such ring! They would be among her dearest possessions. They would bring her great power.

Noor reached for the rings, but the water would not part for her seeking hands. She tried again and again, but the surface of the water was as impenetrable as glass.

As Noor slumped, defeated, against the half-drowned obelisk, memory stirred. This was vaguely familiar. Young wizards had come before, and would again. After all, it was the family custom. And some of them would hurl their deathwizard dreams into the mist.

But she so hated waiting! And it was cold in the swamp, painfully cold. She huddled at the base of the obelisk, wrapped her arms tightly around her shivering form. Despairing tears slid down her cheeks, mingling with the slowly rising waters. D

WHAT'S THIS GUY'S STORY?



Your honor rivals that of a Jedi. No one can ever know this. You live in a time when the reins of power dance free and many hands reach to take them. The senate is your battlefield. Subtlety is your weapon.

The new *Star Wars*® *Roleplaying Game* holds a universe of possibilities for fans of every era—all of the action and heroism of the classic trilogy and all-new adventures for Episode I.

More depth. More skills and feats.
More Force powers. More *Star Wars*.

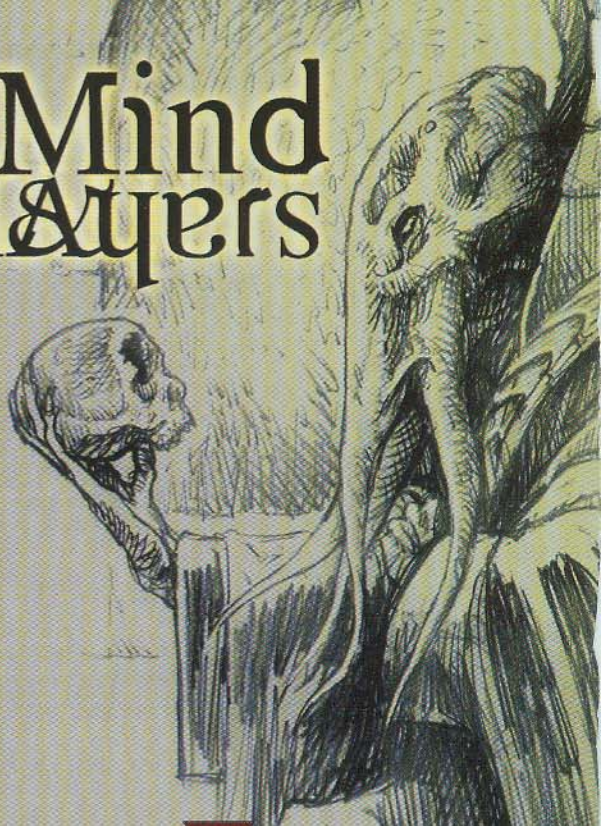
The official *Star Wars* website
www.starwars.com
Wizards of the Coast® website
www.wizards.com/starwars

STAR WARS®

ROLEPLAYING GAME

© 2001 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ® or TM where indicated. All rights reserved. Used under authorization.
Wizards of the Coast is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Mind flayers



MIND BLAST

What *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* wondrous item—the only one that anagrams to a single common word—is an anagram of a word that means "putting on a play again?"

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on the next page.

no. 22

by Mike Selinker

Here is a puzzling bestiary of monsters from *Dungeons & Dragons*. Each monster's name is made up of the letters listed, but you can use them as many times as you want in any order. For example, you might get the word INTERVALS if the monster's name was AERIAL SERVANT. As a heads-up, some of the monsters appear for the first time in the 3rd Edition *Monster Manual*.

	LETTERS	MONSTER
1.	CUBS	_____
2.	SHARK	_____
3.	RIVET	_____
4.	HATING	_____ _____
5.	FLOWER	_____
6.	CROAK	_____
7.	GROANED	_____ _____
8.	TERMINAL	_____ _____
9.	RESPAWN	_____ _____
10.	MINGLERS	_____ _____
11.	DUPING	_____ _____
12.	HALTING	_____ _____
13.	BRIGADE	_____ _____
14.	TAVERN	_____
15.	REMOUNTS	_____ _____
16.	TRAIPSED	_____ _____
17.	HORK	_____ _____
18.	ACHIER	_____
19.	OUTRAGES	_____
20.	NAVIES	_____ _____

no. 21 SOLUTION

Barathor's the lawful good deva, Aznimul's the chaotic good eladrin, Dave's the lawful evil devil, and Codexun's the chaotic evil demon. Here's why:

Since three of the drinkers make the claim that they're lawful good, you know that at least two of them are lying. And Dave can't be lawful good, because he says he isn't, and if he were lawful good he couldn't say he wasn't.

That leaves Aznimul, Barathor, and Codexun as potentially lawful good. If Codexun was lawful good, then it's true that Aznimul and Dave are both evil (since they both can't be good). Dave's definitely telling the truth that he's not lawful good, so he must be lawful evil. That means his other two statements must be lies. But in fact they are both true: Aznimul is evil, and Codexun is good. And so Codexun cannot be lawful good.

That leaves Aznimul and Barathor as potentially lawful good. If Aznimul were lawful good, that means both Barathor and Codexun lie about being lawful good. Codexun says the true statement, then, that Barathor lied at least once. Dave also makes a true statement, that he's not lawful good. So that means that Barathor's the only one who lies all the time. If that's to be believed, then Dave is lawful—and because of Aznimul's purity, evil. So he lies that Aznimul's evil and that Codexun is good. But there's the problem. If Dave and Barathor are evil, Codexun must be good. And so Aznimul cannot be lawful good.

Therefore Barathor must be lawful good. This means Codexun is chaotic and Dave is evil. As the latter is true, his other two statements must be false. Therefore, Aznimul is good and Codexun is evil. So that means Codexun is chaotic evil, Dave is lawful evil, and Aznimul is chaotic good.

Note: We made this one extra-super tough by having a tiefling masquerade as an eladrin. Maybe bartenders lie twice as often as they tell the truth.

The Adventures of VOLO

THE URGE TO HUNT

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like a rare and strange beast, slain by hunters, the likes of which not one astonished observer has ever seen before. On this occasion, I write of two hunts currently gaining popularity and importance in Faerûn. The squeamish should be aware that this won't be a catalog of gory trophies nor an enthusiastic description of slaying after slaying, but (as the scribe Asgerlan Burtrann once described his controversial work *Cormyrian Customs And Scandals*), "a brief and tasteful inquiry into interesting social pastimes and their effects."[1]

The Dark Dragon Hunt

Pirate depredations killed the early Sembian "noble"[2] pastime of voyaging to monster-infested "Wild Isles" in the Sea of Fallen Stars for beast hunts centuries ago. Yet Sembians like to think of themselves as valiant, risk-taking hunters; those who doubt this given their general tendency to obesity and love of luxuries need only glance at the many hunting scenes on tapestries hanging in inns, taverns, and private homes. Many Sembians retain a thirst for hunting and pay large sums to be taken on boar hunts in the Dales, or to hunt more exotic game farther afield.

An enterprising pirate by the name of Endreth Molipher (who became involved with slavers and found it prudent to stage his own death in a shipwreck and "drop out of the trade" for a time) hit upon an idea after a harrowing experience in 1359 DR.

He was hired to kidnap a reclusive wizard, Onsible Draung, and deliver him as a blinded, tongueless, and handless slave to serve on the rowing-benches of a trading galley operating out of Westgate. Molipher managed to seize and subdue Draung, but he almost died under the claws and jaws of the wizard's monstrous guardians.

Under torture, Onsible revealed that he was in the habit of collecting monsters on his travels, subduing them with spells, and feeding them with lesser beasts produced by captive deepspawn. Molipher fulfilled his commission and returned to the wizard's estate—to find it being ransacked and blasted apart by greedy Sembian wizards in search of magic.

Aided by several minor wizards among these scavengers who were eager to earn easy fees for a task that would temporarily remove them from what was becoming a vicious many-sided spell-duel,[3] Molipher caged and carried away the deepspawn, sailing them to the large but undeveloped pirate island of Storna,[4] notable only for the dangerous shoals that surround it and its tiny, dangerous, rocky harbor (festooned with the remnants of many shipwrecks).

There Molipher built a dwelling and entered into a formal pact with three wizards whose identities he prefers to

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1 "Tasteful" is a word whose boundaries folk seldom agree upon. It must be noted that the good Volo fails to apprise the reader of the fate of Asgerlan: He was dragged to death behind a horse on the orders of Throrton Marliir, for "staining the good names and characters of the fine families of the realm, and thereby besmirching all Cormyr, and moreover laying bare diverse secrets and weaknesses of the kingdom to all of its foes possessed of the ability to read, or listen to what others read aloud—which might well include a few Sembians."

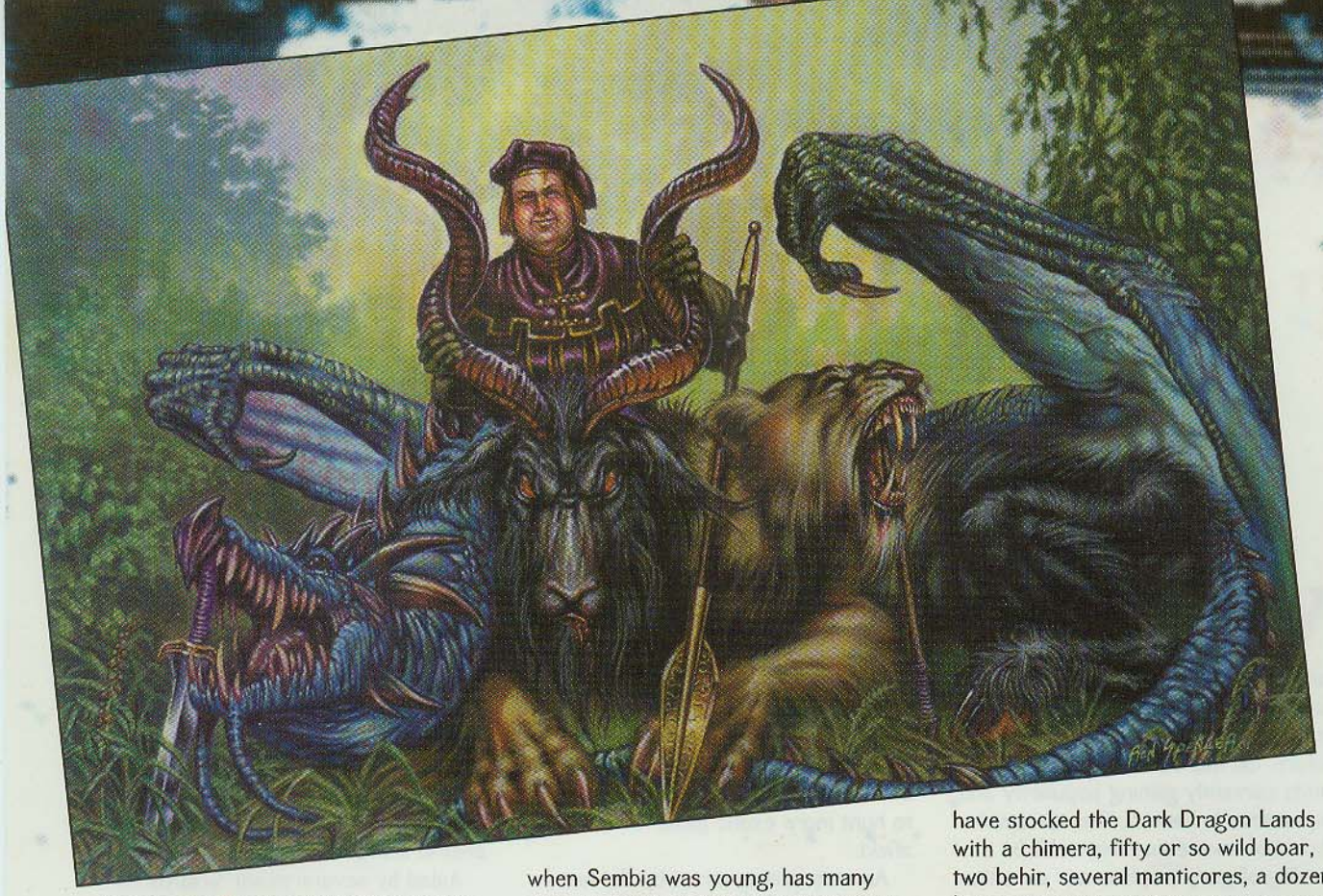
2 That is, an activity undertaken by the richest Semmar—that's what we used to call them, though the term seems little used these days—merchants to show their less fortunate fellow Sembians just how wealthy they were. It was rare to have idle time enough for such dangerous and expensive pursuits. Therefore, look ye, how special they were.

3 This struggle is known to have caused the deaths of the wizards Ieirgyn Malaunt of Ordulin, Gargreth Mraeyvyn of Hillsfar, and at least a dozen minor wizards. The estate—formerly a wooded, walled triangle of land in the western reaches of the city of Saerloon with Draung's plain, simple stone tower at its center—was ultimately reduced to a smoking pit. Wild magic yet lingers there, though new homes have been raised on the site. No trace of trees, walls, or tower remains. At least one combatant was forced into the shape of a phantom fungus, a prison from which he's yet to be released; he's rumored to wander farm woodlots near Saerloon or lurk in its cellars or sewers.

4 An isle still not on most charts. Seek it a day or so south and west of the Dragonisle, close to the city of Telpir.

5 Know ye that they are, in fact, the fat, gluttonous, and wine-loving Halartan Groune of Drelt (a hunters' hamlet northeast of Daerlun); the cold, shrewd, and secretive investor Orbel Mhaerouzan of Saerloon; and the adventurer and legendary seducer of highborn ladies Gorstal Hammers of Telpir. If ye feel a hankering to rid the

Answer to Mind Blast: RING GATES (RESTAGING)



keep secret.[5] Each of them brings him magically subdued monsters whenever they can capture such beasts, and each of them has a hideaway ("magical cache" would perhaps be a more accurate term) on the island. Using the deepspawn to produce enough wild, roaming food, Molipher raises monsters on Storna and sails them, caged, to Yhaunn, for release into a large, wooded hunting preserve on the northern edge of Sembia. Every season, his agents start rumors of particularly rare and deadly beasts to be defeated in the "Dark Dragon Hunt"—and each year, increasing numbers of wealthy Sembians pay handsomely for the pleasure of being guided through the bogs, thickets, and rolling hills of "the Dark Dragon Lands."

There is no dark Dragon, and never has been, but Molipher has found that his guests like the thrill of danger his tales of a ghostly guardian dragon bring. It drives the more fearful among them into hiring some of his men as guides, and not wanting to incur "the dragon's displeasure" is his convenient excuse for not repairing the old ruined castle he uses as a hunting lodge into the palatial opulence that Sembians expect elsewhere.

The castle, built as the hold of a self-styled "Duke Baraudos" in the days when Sembia was young, has many deep and rather damp storage cellars, and in one of these Molipher keeps hidden some beast-trophies (claws, stuffed heads, and the like). Hopeless hunters are always convinced (with the help of drink and beautiful companions) to spend a last night at the secluded Haunted Lake Lodge, and there, after they are put to bed, one of Molipher's wizards puts vivid images of a fearsome monster attack—and their valor in slaying the beast—into their dreams. When they awaken, they are treated with awe, told of their prowess, and presented with a suitable monster trophy of "their" kill.

Molipher isn't loathe to sell discreet wizards and alchemists either live beasts or body parts and essences for their work. His staff needs provide solid career opportunities for folk who like to work magic, but they lack the ambition or ruthless, danger-dismissing nature necessary to really rise in the world as independent wizards. One can enjoy a good life, some excitement, and light work duties in the Dark Dragon Lands while pursuing magical studies in a relaxed manner—and there's often a chance for some real rewards, and peril, if one of Molipher's wizard partners needs magical assistance with a task or on an expedition.

In recent years, Molipher is known to have stocked the Dark Dragon Lands with a chimera, fifty or so wild boar, two behir, several manticores, a dozen lions, a wyvern, a stinger, a water naga (put into Haunted Lake, and still not slain), and even a beholder that is blinded in several eyes. Molipher himself is known to own and use at least two griffon steeds, and to have acquired enough magic items to escape alive from several confrontations with hostile Sembian wizards.

Just in the last few months, a disquieting rumor has surfaced in Ordulin and Yhaunn: For a fee, folk whose disappearance is desired can be kidnapped, transformed into beast-shape by magic, and released in the Dark Dragon Lands during a hunt, to be brought down by eager Sembian hunters.

The Black Bucket Hunt

A new and dangerous pastime has erupted among the bored and jaded nobles of Waterdeep. There have been only two annual "Black Bucket Hunts" thus far, but their wild proceedings have led no less than Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun to publicly warn: "I've been meaning to fill up Undermountain for some time now. This just might do it."

Fill up Undermountain? The greatest tourist attraction—and brigand removal service—of the great city of Waterdeep? It appears that wizards don't think before they speak any more

than kings do. Still, this tendency makes grand pronouncements prime entertainment.

This could, of course, be an empty threat, uttered to make participants curb their deeds. If I must hear threats, archmages at least have the vocabulary to make them interesting. I'd love to hear Elminster, The Simbul, and Khelben all threaten each other . . . from a safe distance away. Half a continent or so should be about right, don't you think?

The Black Bucket Hunt is undertaken by drunken, thrill-seeking nobles at a revel chosen by mutual agreement (thus far hosted by the Kothonts and then the Urmbrusks), and staged by a mysterious group of masked women sponsored by many senior nobles. From a large, battered, and fire-scorched bucket, small tokens are selected by participants, dividing them randomly into teams—often grouped with rivals and longtime foes.

The bucket is then filled with rubies and a dozen tokens that each exempt the bearer from all city fines, fees, and taxes for a year. It is then magically transported away (in a showy process of spellcastings, monster-summonings, and the like) to "a secret corner of Undermountain."

The teams (usually eight or more groups of at least six folk each) are then dressed in ridiculous, magically-luminous costumes and conducted through the city in a raucous parade to locales where they're teleported or shown down through cellars into Undermountain. The area where the Hunt occurs is, 'tis said, scoured of monsters thrice before the event begins,[6] and many passages temporarily walled off to largely seal it away from most of sprawling, dangerous Undermountain. Moreover, so the whispers go, Halaster himself approves of this hunt, and takes no part in frustrating or endangering it.

Nevertheless, there are some "monsters"—usually human skeletons, spiders with paralyzing bites, and the like—to be met with in the Hunting Ground, as well as unpleasant features like dung-slides, garbage heaps, and "perfume bombs" (rubbery spheres filled with cheap, strong, less-than-pleasant liquid scents) that participants can find and hurl at predators and each other.

The first team to lay hands on the Black Bucket is magically transported—all of its members at once, regardless of their condition or location—back to the revel, to divide their loot publicly (often in a violent squabble).

The luminous costumes are usually of pink, yellow, or orange flimsy cloth, and sport waggling tails, exaggerated bird beaks and wings, forests of small dangling arms, and the like. They provide the Hunt's only sources of illumination. During the hunt, participants are often stripped (so as to be left in the dark) by rival teams or even members of their own team, and although efforts are made to ban the use of armor, magic items, and weapons by participants, some always sneak in.

The Hunt usually includes a few murders, much violence, and a large number of wounded, senseless, or scared participants (the latter wandering cold and lost) who must be rounded up by a team of Watchful Order wizards and armsmen after the prize has been found.

Given the potential for slaying, maiming, or disfiguring foes, it seems surprising that so many nobles eagerly and avidly participate—but despite the silliness and relatively (to a noble) paltry prize to be won, "winning" the Hunt carries a considerable cachet among Waterdhavians of all social standing. Strangers and commoners who've been part of the two winning teams thus far have found doors opened for them in social circles, guilds, and both informal cabals and formal circles of investors all over the city. The Hunt is gaining fame and popularity, with word reaching up and down the Sword Coast, and Waterdhavians are speaking of it to outlanders with pride!

Between Hunts, the Bucket itself can be seen on display (under heavy and magically-assisted guard, after several successful "snatch" attempts) in the entry hall of Piergeiron's Palace.

Priests of many major faiths attend each Hunt to heal participants (healing fees are paid by the sponsoring nobles, not the hunters), and at the second hunt several "consolation prizes" (notably a huge silver tankard whose lid was topped with a sculpted, bejeweled beholder) were awarded to hunters who took particularly spectacular pratfalls or intrepid actions.

It seems several wizards will be allowed to cast modified *arcane eye* spells at future Hunt-revels (under strict Watchful Order supervision, to prevent all other magics from being cast into the Hunting Ground) that allow revelers to watch Hunt proceedings from afar (what the *arcane eye* sees being "projected" into the air as a large, floating vertical image). Only two such spells were managed at the last Hunt (none were cast at the first). These showed Guster Ilitul strangling Delbert Thorp during a battle between teams, and thrusting Thorp's body underwater, and an amorous encounter of great passion and acrobatic skill between Tlannada Gralhund and Daervin Husteem, undertaken in a room awash in cherry fruit jelly transported in onto their heads for the occasion by a mischievous Arsten Thunderstaff II. Both scenes were reported to be highly entertaining, and revelers loudly desired more extensive viewing of future Hunts.

Inevitably, betting on various outcomes of the Hunt has begun. In other events, such a "raising of the stakes" has led to violence, deception, and an escalation of weaponry—but in the Black Bucket Hunt, such tendencies were well underway, regardless.

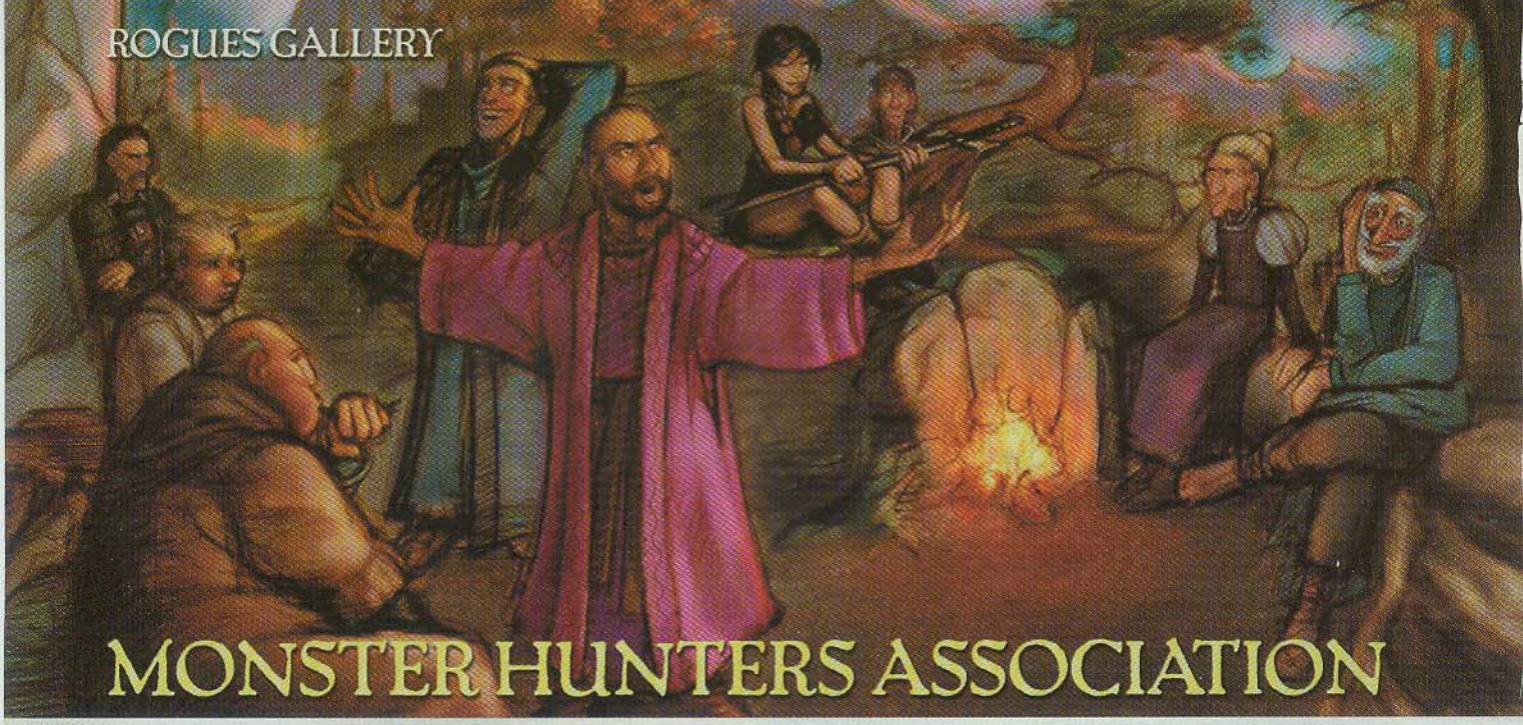
The origin of the Bucket itself remains mysterious, by the way, though there are the inevitable rumors of its having magical powers, a sinister ultimate purpose, and sacred significance to at least one cult.

Realms of a wizard or three, feel free to choose these fellows; we'll not keenly feel their loss.

6 This is true, for I've seen the adventurers hired to do so. They're usually expendable sorts from outside the city, but they are always well-paid (and bribed even more highly by this noble family's agent and then that one, to leave a note, concealed weapon, false black bucket, or the like in the area they're scouring).

To make things more adventurous for these hirelings, there are even signs that some of the predators who inhabit Undermountain have begun to anticipate the event, and they gather to feed on the adventurers or the hunters who soon follow.

7 "Approves of" is a phrase I'd avoid here; let it be said rather that the entertainment it affords Halaster amuses him sufficiently that he deigns not to deliberately slay or entrap participants.



MONSTER HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

BY JOHNATHAN M. RICHARDS • ILLUSTRATED BY MIKE MAY

The Monster Hunters Association is a non-profit organization devoted to spreading knowledge about the wondrous and fabulous creatures inhabiting the wide world.

Yeah, right.

Actually, the truth is much harsher: The Monster Hunters Association is an organization of wizards and sages dedicated to hunting down strange and wondrous creatures for the sole purpose of using their body parts as material spell components, ingredients in the fashioning of magic inks used to record various arcane spell formulae, and in the creation of magic items. Their bottom line is twofold: money and power. The money comes from the sale of the wondrous items and parts of the creatures slain by the Association; power comes from the use of such items themselves.

This view is best encapsulated in the person of Dreelix, the President and founder of the prestigious Monster Hunters Association. Grindle and Zantoullios, also both original members, are equally happy to exploit nature's creatures for their own profit. Not all Monster Hunters share this view, however. Some of the later additions, like Buntleby, actually enjoy learning about the creatures around them, and while they certainly don't mind the profits to be made through Association business, it isn't their primary motivation.

If the Monster Hunters have one thing in common, it's a tendency for unpreparedness. Part of this flaw stems from impulsiveness or impatience (especially on the part of Dreelix), but their greatest downfall seems to be their careless habit of not carrying a full component of spells in their spell inventory. They also have an inclination for in-fighting, especially between Buntleby and Dreelix, neither of whom has a very high opinion of the other.

Presented here for the first time are the game statistics of the Monster Hunters, six wizards, two experts, a fighter, and one osquip.

Three of the wizards form the executive branch of the organization: Dreelix leads the Monster Hunters as President; Lady Ablasta serves as Secretary; and Grindle the Coin-Counter acts as Treasurer.

The research end of the Monster Hunters Association consists mainly of Willowquisp the Zoophile, Buntleby of the Western Grove, and his mentor, Spontayne the Studious. Together, these three men do most of the studying up on the unusual creatures that the Association is likely to hunt. (Willowquisp in particular has a notable interest in the "goofy" monsters.) They brief their fellow members at Monster Hunter Association meetings, and if they're lucky some might actually pay attention.

Zantoullios and Old Gumphrey the Alchemist perform most of the actual hands-on work once the monster in question has been slain. Zantoullios specializes in magic-item creation, while Old Gumphrey handles most of the magic potion work (with the exception of the healing potions, which Zantoullios insists on tinkering with until he gets the formula down just right—so far, he hasn't quite mastered the exact amount of troll's blood needed, resulting in some rather bizarre side-effects).

Rhionda, the newest member of the Monster Hunters Association, stands out somewhat by being neither wizard nor sage. A powerful fighter, she has a wealth of practical field experience and brings a fresh dose (some might say an *initial* dose) of common sense to the Monster Hunters.

Note: The Monster Hunters are presented as they have appeared in various "Ecology" articles in the past few years. If you add them to your campaign, be sure to include the additional possessions and spells listed in the sidebars.

BUNTLEBY of the Western Grove

Male Human, 9th-Level Wizard

Strength	11 (+0)	Fortitude Save	+3	Armor Class	11
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Reflex Save	+4	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	10 (+0)	Will Save	+7	Touch AC	11
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	NG		
Wisdom	13 (+1)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5 ft. 8 in.)		
Hit Points	26	Melee Attack:	+4		
		Ranged Attack:	+5		

Skills: Concentration +16†, Diplomacy +8, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nature) +9, Ride +6, Spellcraft +15

†Includes the +4 bonus for Combat Casting.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Enchant Arms and Armor, Enchant Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Mastery (*polymorph self, stinking cloud, teleport*)

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Sylvan

Possessions*: Buntleby is seldom seen with magic items unless he's preparing for a specific mission.

Documented Spell Use*: 1st-level: *magic missile, reduce;* 2nd-level: *continual flame, invisibility;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, fireball, haste, stinking cloud;* 4th-level: *charm monster, polymorph other, polymorph self;* 5th-level: *cloudkill, stoneshape, teleport.*

Appearance: Buntleby's most striking feature is his completely bald head. He originally had a head of light brown hair, but it was shaved by a band of mischievous jermlaine that caught him infiltrating their lair magically disguised as one of them. Buntleby's decided to keep his head shaved (at least for the time being), partly to remind him of his mistake, but mostly because Azurielle the forest nymph once commented that he looked good bald. (He did allow his eyebrows to grow back, though.)

Buntleby usually wears simple wizard's robes of blue, tan, or gray. He is known to carry a dagger at his belt, and he is frequently found in the company of his six-legged osquip, Ozzie.

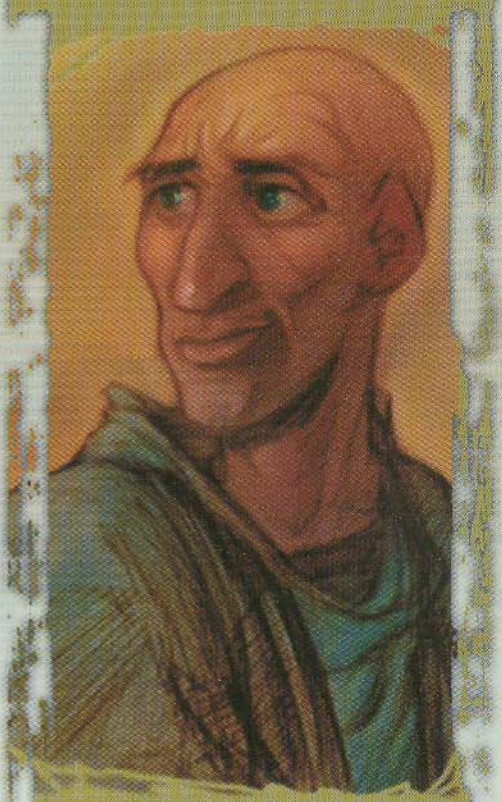
Background: Buntleby's early career was spent as an adventurer. Little is known of his early adventuring days, but this might change now that Rhionda the Swordmistress, one of the members of his former adventuring band, has joined the Monster Hunters. Rhionda and Buntleby get on well; she teasingly calls him by the nickname "Bunt," and he pretends to be irritated by it.

As a Monster Hunter, Buntleby's closest association is with Willowquisp the Zoophile, an elderly sage with an interest in unusual monsters. He is also close friends with Spontayne the Studious, who is not only Buntleby's wizardly mentor but sponsored him for membership into the prestigious Association.

Little is known of Buntleby's family. He inherited a small patch of land, the Western Grove, which he has since converted into an osquip farm. He retains the caretakers that originally oversaw the property, content to let them deal with the day-to-day operations of the Grove while he devotes himself to his magical studies and the raising of his multi-limbed rodents.

Roleplaying Notes: Buntleby is one of the most easy-going of the Monster Hunters and also one of the most approachable. He makes new friends easily, allowing neither age nor race to become barriers to a new friendship. He has a finely-tuned sense of right and wrong, and he dislikes it when other Monster Hunters "cross the line"; he's not afraid to take on his own friends and companions when he feels he's in the right. An intelligent and reasonable man, Buntleby also has a sarcastic side and a mischievous streak that often surfaces around Dreelix, whom he sees as a pompous, overbearing blowhard with a grossly overdeveloped sense of self-importance.

Buntleby enjoys learning about the strange creatures that the Association hunts down and slays, and while he doesn't mind doing his bit, he doesn't want to see them suffer needlessly. He's an honest man and admits his faults: He holds no ill-will toward the jermlaine that shaved him bald and trussed him up naked in their cavern, since he had trespassed into their territory in the first place.



*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Buntleby should have access to the following spells and equipment:

Possessions: Quarterstaff, masterwork light crossbow, ten masterwork bolts, *scroll of fireball* (7th-level caster), *scroll of summon monster IV* (8th-level caster), *potion of cure serious words, +1 cloak of resistance, +1 ring of protection, wand of magic missile* (9th-level caster, 40 charges), *+2 bracers of armor.*

Spells: 4/5/5/4/2/1: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, detect undead, magic missile, message, reduce, sleep;* 2nd-level: *continual flame, invisibility, levitate, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, haste, fly, lightning bolt, stinking cloud;* 4th-level: *charm monster, dimension door, polymorph other, polymorph self;* 5th-level: *cloudkill, stoneshape, teleport.*

OZZIE: Ozzie the osquip has the most common features of his highly-differentiated, rat-like species: six legs and a long, ratlike tail. His wrinkled, hairless hide is a yellowish gray. Ozzie is devoted to his master, often demonstrating his affection by licking Buntleby's ankles with his raspy tongue.

Osquip: CR 1/3; Small Beast (3 ft. long); HD 3d8+3; hp 17; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., burrow 5 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural); Atk +1 melee (1d6-1, bite); Face/Reach 5 ft. x 5 ft./5 ft.; SA —; SQ —; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 8, Cha 6.

DREELIX, President of the Monster Hunters Association

Male Human, 10th-Level Wizard

Strength	10 (+0)	Fortitude Save	+4	Armor Class	11
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Reflex Save	+6	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	12 (+1)	Will Save	+8	Touch AC	11
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	LN		
Wisdom	8 (-1)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	9 (-1)	Size	M (5 ft. 4 in.)		
Hit Points	35	Melee Attack:	+5		
		Ranged Attack:	+6		

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +5, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (local) +10, Ride +5, Spellcraft +16, Spot +5

Feats: Armor Proficiency (light), Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Run, Scribe Scroll

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome

Possessions*: Dreelix is almost always found with his gavel, the symbol of his power and prestige, near at hand. (Rumor has it that he takes it to bed with him, cradling it as a child might hold a stuffed animal.) He has a *carpet of flying* (5 ft. by 7 ft.) but he hasn't mastered the art of landing it just yet.

Documented Spell Use*: 0-level: *light;* 2nd-level: *alter self, continual flame,* 3rd-level: *fireball;* 4th-level: *charm monster;* 5th-level: *hold monster.*

Appearance: Dreelix is in his forties. He usually wears brightly-colored robes of red or purple, often with elaborate trim, and he's liable to wear gaudy rings in an effort to look impressive. He has thinning dark hair, dark, beady eyes, and a short-bearded face that usually wears an expression of regal haughtiness. Dreelix is short and somewhat stocky, and he does his best to compensate by constantly looking down his nose at other people.

Background: As a young lad, Dreelix washed out of several fighter training schools, including both the prestigious Sir Scromblatt's School for Young Knights in Training and Master Micklebie's Junior Warriors, for demonstrating "a total lack of skill in the warrior arts" and "new levels of ineptitude." Finally, a kindly old wizard took Dreelix on as an apprentice as a favor to Dreelix's mother (who was, shall we say, somewhat generous with favors herself).

Surprisingly, Dreelix caught on rather well to the ways of arcane spellcraft and showed reasonable progress through the wizardly ranks. This gave him both a newfound sense of confidence and a total disdain for fighters. As Dreelix is quick to point out, "Any bumbling oaf can learn to wave a sword around, but it takes great skill and mental fortitude to master the wizardly arts!"

Roleplaying Notes: Dreelix's two most distinctive traits are his haughtiness and his impatience. He looks down on non-wizards (sorcerers have his respect but also his resentment—how dare magic come so easily to them when he has to bust his butt poring over his spellbooks every night?), and his position as the President of the Monster Hunters Association allows him to look down on other wizards as his inferiors as well. As far as monsters go, he sees them only as valuable resources to be plundered for his own benefit. Unfortunately, Dreelix is somewhat loose in his definition of "monsters," having in the past included nymphs in the category and speculated aloud as to the possible uses of a dead gnome.

Dreelix enjoys hearing himself talk and banging his gavel on the head table. Drawing everyone's attention is his favorite pastime. He dislikes it when strangers don't immediately recognize his obvious importance.

Dreelix has a somewhat short attention span and spends much of his time daydreaming "through the boring bits" of Association meetings. As a result, it's more than likely that Dreelix is unaware of many of the facts his Association has researched on a particular monster—typified by the time he attacked a shambling mound after immobilizing it, only to have spores spray him in the face and cause mushrooms to sprout from his nostrils.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Dreelix should not have his *carpet of flying* and should have access to the following spells and equipment:

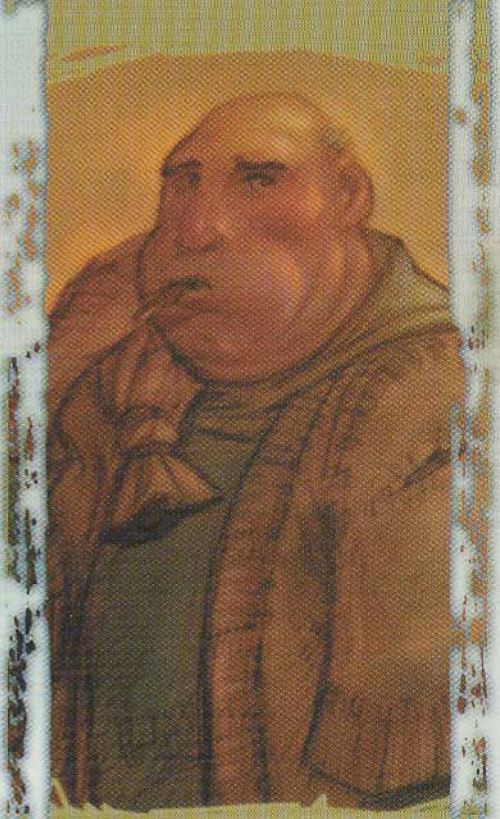
Possessions: Quarterstaff, two masterwork daggers, *scroll of fireball* (10th-level caster), *scroll of flesh to stone, scroll of teleport, potion of haste, +1 cloak of resistance, +1 ring of protection, wand of lightning bolt* (28 charges), *+2 bracers of armor.*

Spells: 4/5/5/5/3/2: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st-level: alarm, *charm person, detect undead, magic missile, message, reduce, sleep;* 2nd-level: *alter self, continual flame, invisibility, levitate, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, haste, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, stinking cloud;* 4th-level: *charm monster, dimension door, polymorph other, polymorph self;* 5th-level: *cloudkill, hold monster, stoneshape, teleport.*

GRINDLE the Coin-Counter

Male Human, 9th-Level Wizard

Strength	18 (+4)	Fortitude Save	+8	Armor Class	9
Dexterity	9 (-1)	Reflex Save	+2	Flat-footed AC	9
Constitution	16 (+3)	Will Save	+6	Touch AC	9
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	LN		
Wisdom	10 (+0)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	8 (-1)	Size	M (6 ft. 1 in.)		
Hit Points	53	Melee Attack:	+8		
		Ranged Attack:	+3		



Skills: Appraise +7, Concentration +13, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Profession (accountant) +10, Profession (cook) +10, Spellcraft +13
Feats: Enlarge Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Unarmed Strike, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longspear), Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Toughness
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome
Possessions*: Grindle carries a *portable hole* in the pocket of his stained robe; it comes in handy as "extra seating" when transporting more than four people on Dreelix's *carpet of flying*. He's also carried a coil of rope, a grappling hook, and a roast chicken in an old backpack, useful when going "naga fishing."
Documented Spell Use*: 2nd-level: *alter self*, 4th-level: *polymorph self*; 5th-level: *hold monster*.

Appearance: Easily the largest of the Monster Hunters, Grindle tips the scales at nearly 300 pounds. Although sloppy by nature, he isn't sloppy fat, carrying a build like that of a bouncer (although the folds of flesh dangling from his upper arms tend to wiggle when he moves). Grindle is known for his poor hygiene. His robes often carry reminders of his most recent meals, and by the time you get close enough to notice his distinctive body odor, the sweat-stains under his arms are usually visible.

Grindle's face is clean-shaven, and he wears his graying hair (what little remains of it) close-cropped to the skin.

Background: Grindle is one of the founding members of the Monster Hunters Association and serves as its treasurer. As such, he keeps track of each member's dues payments and is quick to slap on a 10% late fee when payments aren't made on time. His status as treasurer, plus his uncanny ability to keep track of the respective values of hundreds of magic items, have earned him the nickname "the Coin-Counter."

Roleplaying Notes: Of all the wizards in the Monster Hunters Association, Grindle is the most likely to forget about spellcasting and go wading into battle. At such times he seldom uses a weapon, preferring to deal out damage with his bare hands. Nonetheless, he has no formal training as a fighter.

Grindle is loyal to Dreelix, serving as his primary lieutenant. He even knows the command word to Dreelix's coveted *carpet of flying*, an honor Dreelix bestows upon few people. This loyalty has led Grindle to follow Dreelix on some of his more unethical ventures, such as attacking a forest nymph to capture some tears and a few locks of her hair, and then later trying to capture her pseudodragon companion. (Some Monster Hunters, alas, never learn their lessons.) He doesn't follow Dreelix blindly, however; he recently voted against his friend to allow Rhionda, a mere fighter, into the prestigious Monster Hunters.

Grindle is an easygoing fellow with a good sense of self-worth. He doesn't let himself worry about what others might think of him and insults wash over him like water off a duck's back. He's yet to been seen getting angry at anyone.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Grindle should not have his *portable hole* and should have access to the following spells and equipment:
Possessions: Longspear, masterwork heavy crossbow, 10 masterwork bolts, *scroll of fireball* (7th-level caster), *scroll of cloudkill* (8th-level caster), *potion of cure serious words*, *+1 cloak of resistance*, *ring of jumping*, *wand of magic missile* (9th-level caster, 40 charges), *+2 bracers of armor*.
Spells: 4/5/5/4/2/1: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *disrupt undead*, *light*, *read magic*; 1st-level: *charm person*, *detect undead*, *magic missile*, *message*, *reduce*, *sleep*; 2nd-level: *alter self*, *continual flame*, *invisibility*, *levitate*, *web*; 3rd level: *dispel magic*, *haste*, *fireball*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*, *stinking cloud*; 4th-level: *charm monster*, *dimension door*, *polymorph other*, *polymorph self*; 5th-level: *hold monster*, *cloudkill*, *stoneshape*.

ZANTOULLIOS the Gangly Wizard

Male human, 9th-level Wizard

Strength	9 (-1)	Fortitude Save	+3	Armor Class	10
Dexterity	11 (+0)	Reflex Save	+3	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	10 (+0)	Will Save	+5	Touch AC	10
Intelligence	17 (+3)	Alignment	CG		
Wisdom	9 (-1)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	12 (+1)	Size	M (5 ft. 11 in.)		
Hit Points	26	Melee Attack:	+3		
		Ranged Attack:	+4		

Skills: Alchemy +13, Climb +4, Concentration +12, Heal +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +13, Search +8, Spellcraft +13
Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wand, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell
Languages: Celestial, Common, Dwarven, Elven
Possessions*: Zantoullios carries a collapsible staff and has a large complement of scrolls scattered in a disorganized clutter all over his laboratory, including at least one with a *mind blank* spell on it. Zantoullios often carries a few *potions of cure light wounds* in his pockets for emergencies, although these frequently cause the imbiber's nose to grow by 5 or 6 inches and sprout greenish warts.
Documented Spell Use*: 2nd-level: *alter self, levitate, Melf's acid arrow;* 3rd-level: *charm monster, fireball, stinking cloud;* 5th-level: *hold monster*

Appearance: Zantoullios is a thin, gangly man, with straw-colored hair in a bowlcut. His prominent Adam's-apple bobs up and down his throat when he swallows, which he does frequently when he's nervous. Zantoullios usually wears a simple set of gray robes and a pair of sandals. If he's been tinkering in his lab recently, he's liable to be covered with soot stains, charred ash, powder burns, or worse.
Background: Zantoullios is easily the most disorganized of the Monster Hunters; surprisingly, he's also one of the most adept at magic item creation. He works out of a laboratory he's converted (several times, in fact) from an old barn. Unfortunately, Zantoullios can be a bit absent-minded at times; he's had to rebuild his barn/laboratory no fewer than three times after blowing it up in magic experiments where he's failed to take the proper precautions. For this reason, he's been banned from demonstrating untested mixtures in the Monster Hunters' meeting hall.

Zantoullios' greatest failure is his inability to get the exact amount of powdered troll's blood just right when making healing potions. He's convinced the potion requires it, and he refuses to give up until he masters the art, and refuses to just let Old Gumphrey, the Monster Hunters' senior alchemist, handle it. To that end, Zantoullios has charmed a troll and keeps it in an iron cage in his laboratory. For reasons known only to himself, he's named the troll "Chauncy."

Along with Dreelix and Grindle, Zantoullios is one of the three founding members of the Monster Hunters Association. Although he has no official title in the organization, he serves as the primary creator of magic items.
Roleplaying Notes: Zantoullios is a bumbling bundle of nervous energy. While primarily good-hearted by nature, he nonetheless frequently allows Dreelix to talk him into pursuits of questionable ethics. Still, he at least has the good graces to look embarrassed when caught at something he shouldn't be doing.

Despite his bumbling nature, Zantoullios has a keen intellect and a knack for finding uses for all sorts of monster body parts. (His troglodyte bladder experiments, for one, were universally praised as being state-of-the-art.) He has a wide knowledge of various spells yet frequently finds it easier to try hitting his enemies over the head with his collapsible staff.

Zantoullios is willing to go along with just about any scheme, but he often gets grumpy when things don't work out as planned. He has an eye for the ladies, but his clumsiness always cranks up a couple of notches when in their presence.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Zantoullios should have access to the following spells and equipment:
Possessions: Masterwork dagger, masterwork club, *scroll of fireball* (7th-level caster), *scroll of cloudkill* (8th-level caster), *potion of cure serious words, +1 cloak of resistance, ring of climbing, wand of sleep* (9th-level caster, 37 charges), *+2 bracers of armor.*
Spells: 4/5/5/4/2/1: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, light, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, detect undead, magic missile, message, reduce, sleep;* 2nd-level: *alter self, continual flame, invisibility, levitate, Melf's acid arrow, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, stinking cloud;* 4th-level: *charm monster, dimension door, polymorph other, polymorph self;* 5th-level: *hold monster, cloudkill, stoneshape.*

LADY ABLASTA

Female human, 9th-level Conjurer

Strength	9 (-1)	Fortitude Save	+2	Armor Class	12
Dexterity	14 (+2)	Reflex Save	+5	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	9 (-1)	Will Save	+8	Touch AC	12
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	LN		
Wisdom	10 (+0)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	11 (+0)	Size	M (5 ft. 6 in.)		
Hit Points	21	Melee Attack:	+3		
		Ranged Attack:	+6		

Special: Conjuration specialist; Transmutation spells prohibited.
Skills: Concentration +8, Intuit Direction +5, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Listen +6, Profession (scribe) +11, Scry +15, Spellcraft +12
Feats: Alertness, Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Spell Mastery (*hold monster, invisibility, arcane eye*), Scribe Scroll, Simple Weapon Proficiency
Languages: Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Ignan
Possessions*: Lady Ablasta carries wands in special holders she wears strapped to her forearms under the puffy sleeves of her blouse. When engaged in Association business, she carries the official Monster Hunters' ledger and a feather quill so she can record the minutes of the meeting. She is seldom seen without a perfumed handkerchief, which she also carries in her sleeve.
Documented Spell Use*: 4th-level: *arcane eye;* 5th-level: *hold monster.*

Appearance: Lady Ablasta is a prim-looking, spinsterly woman in her early sixties, with blonde hair turning to gray. Her face is usually pinched in a sour expression of disdain, a look she has practiced and perfected over the years. She is a thin woman, having once been described by a sarcastic naga as having a "scrawny chicken body."

Lady Ablasta habitually dresses in upper-class fashion, favoring long dresses and blouses with puffy sleeves and a high neckline. Her boots usually have pointed toes and more buttons than most peasants can count.

Background: The Conjurer Ablasta serves as the Secretary of the Monster Hunters Association, and she was the first new member to join after it was first founded by Dreelix, Grindle, and Zantoullios. Ablasta relished her status as the sole female Monster Hunter and dislikes now having to share that distinction with the newest member, the much younger Rhionda the Swordmistress.

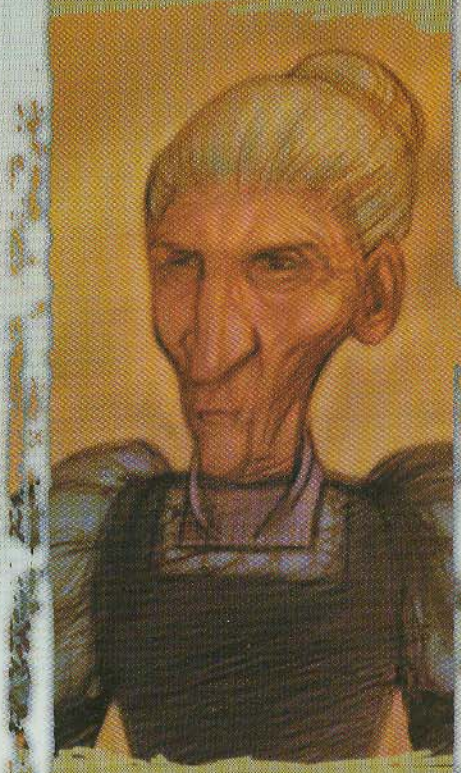
While it's never been quite clear whether Ablasta is really a member of the nobility or just likes pretending that she is, the other Monster Hunters all refer to her as "Lady Ablasta" and give her the respect that she is due. (At least, they do to her face; behind her back, Buntleby's been known to do a wicked Lady Ablasta impersonation.)

Roleplaying Notes: Lady Ablasta tends to be snooty and elitist, looking down on most other people. She respects Dreelix for his leadership (although she dislikes his *carpet of flying* "driving skills"); puts up with Grindle's poor hygiene out of respect for his financial acumen (she first started carrying that perfumed handkerchief shortly after meeting Grindle); but she sees Zantoullios as little more than a bumbling oaf.

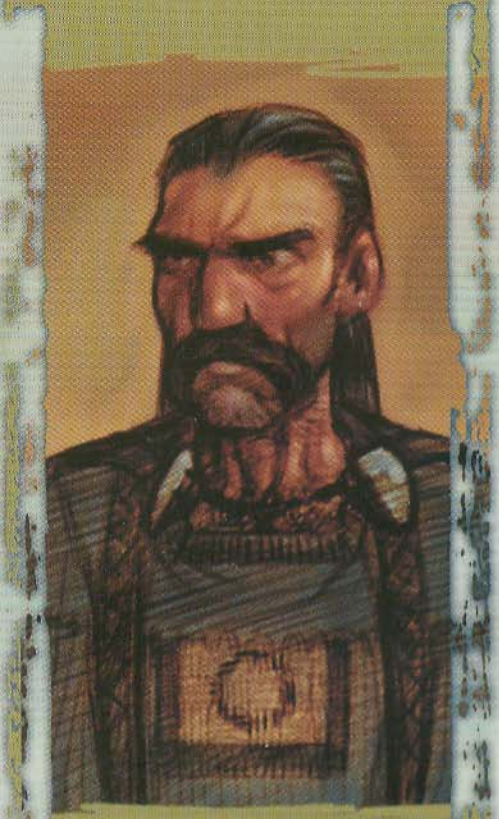
Lady Ablasta has shown herself to be more than a little vain and very jealous of other women, especially those who try usurping her role as "the female Monster Hunter." (This includes not only Rhionda, who succeeded, but also Azurielle the forest nymph, who infiltrated an Association meeting under the pretext of wanting to join.) She doesn't get on well with children, either, often using her *wand of fear* on the neighborhood kids.

During a Monster Hunt, Ablasta generally takes on a support role, often using her *arcane eye* spell to spy upon the potential target. She seldom takes on a combat role, but if pushed beyond the limits of her exasperation Ablasta can become a one-woman combat machine, dealing out punishment to everyone around her as she vents her frustrations. Afterward, she casually returns to her prim and proper ways as if nothing happened.

At home, Lady Ablasta often uses her *arcane eye* spell to spy upon her neighbors, sniffing in disdain if they don't live up to her standards of proper etiquette. If confronted with her snooping, she denies everything, brushing off the mere concept as nonsense.



*To be a balanced NPC of her level, Lady Ablasta should have access to the following spells and equipment:
Possessions: Quarterstaff, *potion of cure serious words, +2 ring of protection, wand of magic missile* (9th-level caster, 32 charges), *wand of fear* (45 charges), *wand of lightning bolt* (38 charges), *+1 bracers of armor.*
Spells: 4/5/5/4/2/1: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, light, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, detect undead, hold portal, magic missile, message, sleep;* 2nd-level: *continual flame, ghoul touch, invisibility, misdirection, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, gust of wind, lightning bolt, tongues, stinking cloud;* 4th-level: *arcane eye, charm monster, dimension door, fear, shout;* 5th-level: *hold monster, cloudkill, wall of force.*



SPONTAYNE the Studious

Male human, 12th-level Wizard

Strength	10 (+0)	Fortitude Save	+3	Armor Class	11
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Reflex Save	+7	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	9 (-1)	Will Save	+11	Touch AC	11
Intelligence	18 (+4)	Alignment	LG		
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (6 ft.)		
Hit Points	22	Melee Attack:	+6/+1		
		Ranged Attack:	+7/+2		

Skills: Alchemy +13, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Scry +19, Spellcraft +19, Spot +5
Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell Scribe Scroll, Simple Weapon Proficiency
Languages: Abyssal, Common, Dwarven, Draconic, Elven
Possessions*: Spontayne usually carries a dagger at his belt and has demonstrated an ability to throw it with accuracy.
Documented Spell Use*: Believe it or not, none. It's rather curious that while Spontayne is the highest-level wizard in the Monster Hunters Association, he has never been seen actually casting a spell. Since he serves as Buntleby's wizardly mentor, it's likely that Spontayne knows a great many (if not all) of the same spells that his student does.

Appearance: Spontayne is a tall, thin, brooding man in his mid-to-late forties, dressing in somber robes of black or gray. He wears his black hair combed straight back and has a slight widow's peak. Spontayne used to sport a full beard; now he wears only a thick, black mustache that covers his upper lip and bends at right angles down to his jaw. He scowls frequently.
Background: Spontayne the Studious joined the Monster Hunters sometime after Lady Ablasta but before Buntleby. His reasons for joining remain his own, for his magical abilities outrank those of any of the other Monster Hunters wizards, and he hasn't shown that great a fondness for any of them save Buntleby, whom he sponsored for membership, and Willowquisp the Zoophile, with whom he often does zoological research. It's possible that Spontayne joined the Monster Hunters out of curiosity or simply as a promising financial venture.

Since studying with Willowquisp, Spontayne has gained an appreciation for learning about the strange creatures that abound in the world. It seems apparent that Spontayne's collection of zoological works might even come close to rivaling those of Willowquisp.
Roleplaying Notes: Spontayne is a quiet man, seldom speaking to others unless absolutely necessary. He is slow to make friends, but once a friendship is made he remains loyal to the core. Even among his friends, though, he remains taciturn and scholarly, slow to make jokes or join in the fun. Spontayne has little patience for ignorance, pettiness, or stupidity, and he is quick to air his views when confronted with someone exhibiting these qualities. (Needless to say, he's not a big fan of Dreelix.)

On the few Hunts in which Spontayne participates, he usually stays in the background with Willowquisp in a support role, letting the others fling their spells against the monster of the day. It's odd that Spontayne has never been seen actually casting a spell; perhaps, as an academician, he sees magical combat as beneath him.

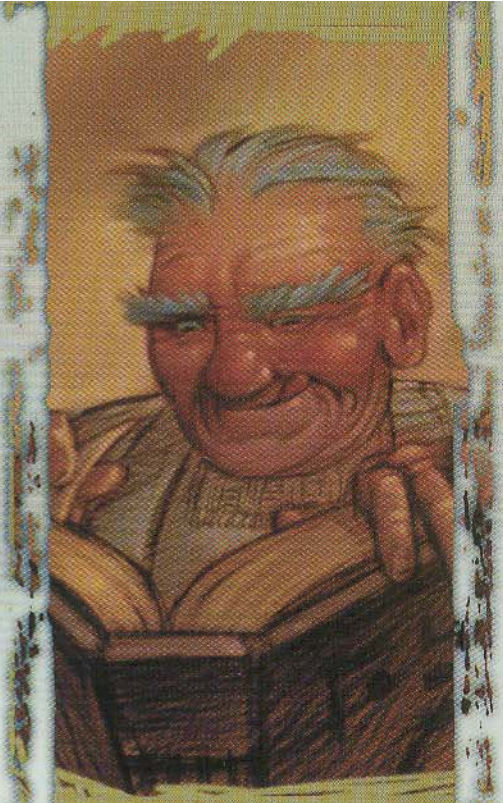
Spontayne is very much a loner; were it not for the Monster Hunters, he'd probably be one of those wizards who locks himself in his castle keep for months on end with his nose in a pile of musty old tomes. As it is, he has one of the worst attendance records of all of the Monster Hunters, and it's likely that he's the one with the late dues payments that Dreelix is always griping about.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Spontayne should have access to the following spells and equipment:
Possessions: Two masterwork daggers, masterwork heavy mace, *scroll of teleport, scroll of acid fog, +1 cloak of resistance, +1 ring of protection, wand of lightning bolt* (9th-level caster, 28 charges), *+3 bracers of armor, +2 headband of intellect.*
Spells: 4/5/5/5/4/3/2: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, flare, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, detect undead, grease, mage armor, magic missile, message, reduce, sleep;* 2nd-level: *continual flame, invisibility, levitate, summon swarm, web;* 3rd level: *dispel magic, haste, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, stinking cloud, wind wall;* 4th-level: *charm monster, detect scrying, dimension door, illusory wall, polymorph other, polymorph self;* 5th-level: *cloudkill, major creation, passwall, stoneshape, teleport;* 6th-level: *acid fog, legend lore, mass suggestion.*

WILLOWQUISP the Zoophile

Male human, 7th-level Expert

Strength	8 (-1)	Fortitude Save	+2	Armor Class	9
Dexterity	9 (-1)	Reflex Save	+1	Flat-footed AC	9
Constitution	10 (+0)	Will Save	+9	Touch AC	9
Intelligence	17 (+3)	Alignment	NG		
Wisdom	14 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	12 (+1)	Size	M (5 ft. 7 in.)		
Hit Points	20	Melee Attack:	+4		
		Ranged Attack:	+4		



Skills: Animal Empathy +11, Climb +9, Handle Animal +11, Hide +9, Knowledge (nature) +15, Listen +12, Move Silently +9, Search +13, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +12
Feats: Iron Will, Skill Focus–Knowledge (nature), Toughness, Track
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome
Possessions*: Willowquisp is seldom seen without at least one of his many volumes of various zoological texts or a notebook of his own observations.

Appearance: Willowquisp is in his late fifties, with a face creased by smile lines and a head of tousled, thinning gray hair that he seldom combs. He wears simple robes of tan or gray, without elaborate ornamentation.
Background: Willowquisp is the central authority in the Monster Hunters Association when it comes to monster research. He enjoys learning about all of nature's creatures, but he has a special place in his heart for some of the goofier ones. Willowquisp maintains a strong network of other sages; if he doesn't know something about a particular creature in question, he usually knows where he can find someone who does. He also keeps an elaborate library of his own in his house.

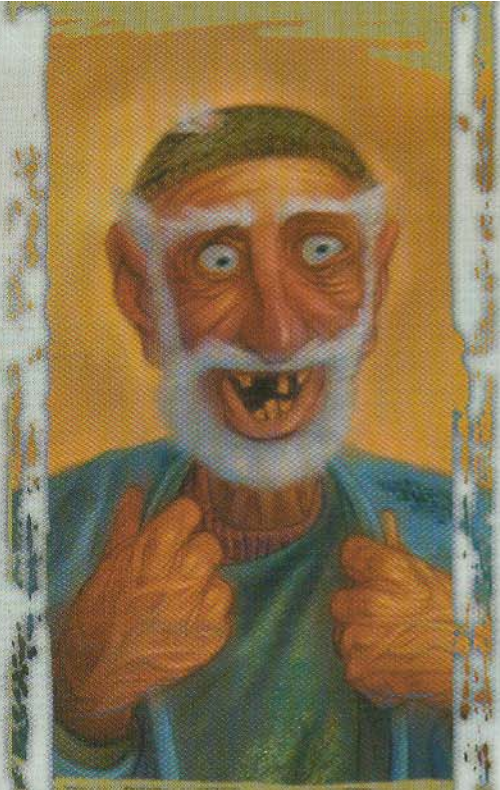
Despite their age difference, Willowquisp and Buntleby have formed a fast friendship since the young mage entered the Association; the two often share a meal at their favorite outdoor cafe. Willowquisp also enjoys spending time with Spontayne, whose studious nature meshes well with the elderly sage's own character. He's often exasperated by Dreelix, especially when he refuses to pay attention to the monster facts that Willowquisp has spent many hours researching.

Roleplaying Notes: Willowquisp the Zoophile is a friendly, amicable sort who loves his work. While he is amazed at some of the stupidity he is forced to endure as a Monster Hunter, he sees his participation in the Association as an important contribution to the field of monster research, and he even holds out the hope that he might actually get some of the other Monster Hunters interested in learning about the monsters themselves, instead of simply the things one can make from their various body parts.

Willowquisp has a keen intellect and is one of the few Monster Hunters capable of staying focused on a topic of discussion. (It's often Willowquisp who must yank the conversation back to its original subject when Dreelix wanders off on a tangent.) He tends to get sulky or grumpy when it becomes obvious that most of the Monster Hunters have stopped listening to his lectures, and he bemoans the fact that most of the Association's focus is always solely on how to kill monsters quickly and what to do with them when they're dead. There are, after all, other equally-fascinating areas to explore: mating rituals, life cycles, ecological niches, migration patterns, embryonic development, mutational trends, and so forth–if only he could get others as interested in these areas as he is! So far, he's had little luck; Buntleby and Spontayne are his only "converts."

During a Hunt, Willowquisp stays in the back, away from any possible combat; he prefers the role of advisor and consultant over that of "monster wrangler." If he has to, he can wield a dagger with nominal adequacy.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Willowquisp should have access to the following equipment:
Possessions: Masterwork dagger, *+1 ring of protection, rope of climbing, boots of elvenkind.*



OLD GUMPHREY the Alchemist

Male human, 3rd-level Adept/4th-level Expert

Strength	7 (-2)	Fortitude Save	+1	Armor Class	12
Dexterity	15 (+2)	Reflex Save	+4	Flat-footed AC	10
Constitution	8 (-1)	Will Save	+7	Touch AC	12
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	CN		
Wisdom	11 (+0)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (5 ft. 9 in.)		
Hit Points	14	Melee Attack:	+2		
		Ranged Attack:	+6		

Skills: Alchemy +14, Appraise +9, Bluff +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (nature) +9, Profession (alchemist) +12, Search +9, Spellcraft +9, Wilderness Lore +7
Feats: Brew Potion, Skill Focus–Alchemy, Skill Focus–Knowledge (arcana), Skill Focus–Profession (alchemist)
Languages: Common, Gnome, Halfling
Possessions*: Old Gumphrey has a vast collection of alchemical equipment in his laboratory, with which he brews the magic potions that the Monster Hunters sell. (Potions are their steadiest source of income.)
Spells*: Old Gumphrey has never been known to use magic, but as he creates the Monster Hunter's potions, he must have some spellcasting skill.

Appearance: Old Gumphrey has white, wispy hair that's getting pretty thin on top and a short, white beard. He often wears a blue robe and usually sports some type of headgear. (His balding pate burns easily in the sun.) Because of his job, his clothing is often covered in chemical stains. Old Gumphrey's missing quite a few of his teeth; this is readily apparent when he laughs, for the aging alchemist doesn't quite laugh so much as cackle with glee.
Background: Old Gumphrey is a fixture in the Monster Hunters Association; although his expertise is in potion brewing, the wily old man's stored an amazing array of knowledge about the creation of all types of magic devices in his head over the years. Thus, while Zantoullios is the primary creator of magic items for the Association, he seldom begins the creation process without first consulting Old Gumphrey.

Old Gumphrey works pretty much on his own, as he has little patience for training competent lab assistants. He lives alone in a small, drafty room in the back of his laboratory. At first glance, one would wonder that anything could ever get done in Old Gumphrey's lab, for the alchemical equipment seems arranged in complete disarray, but the aging alchemist knows the exact location of every beaker and apothecary jar in his lab. It might look disorganized to others, but it makes perfect sense to Old Gumphrey.

Most of Old Gumphrey's alchemical knowledge is stored in his head. Few people can make heads or tails out of the meager scribbled notes he's made in various journals scattered throughout his lab; given Old Gumphrey's disposition about intruders in his laboratory, few people wish to make the effort.
Roleplaying Notes: Old Gumphrey seldom goes along on Monster Hunts, preferring to leave the adventuring business to the younger folk; he's far happier waiting at his lab for the others to bring the "goodies" to him.

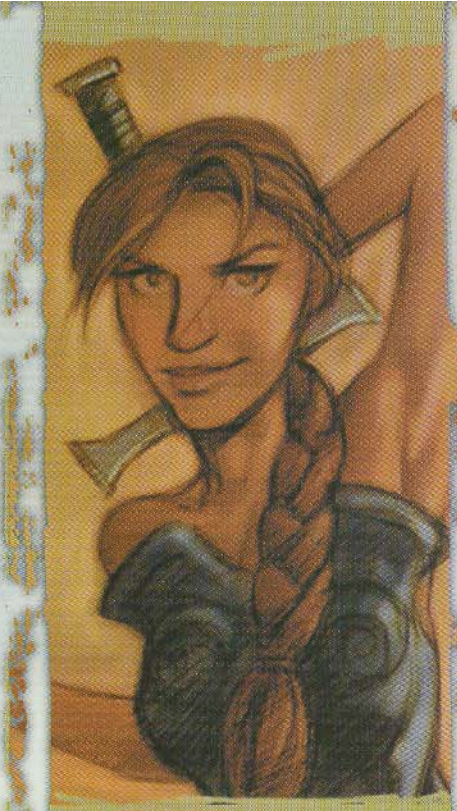
At eighty-seven, Old Gumphrey is easily the oldest of the Monster Hunters, but he's still one of the sharpest. As Old Gumphrey's getting on in years, his hearing's begun to fail him; thus, he often finds himself out of the loop about the Monster Hunters' plans. The fact that the younger Monster Hunters often fail to consider his learned advice during meetings has prompted him to snooze during official Association meetings on more than one occasion. While this irritates Dreelix, what irritates him even more is the fact that Old Gumphrey couldn't care less whether Dreelix is irritated. Old Gumphrey, for his part, is irritated by very little; at his age, it isn't worth the bother. Let the others run off on their wild monster chases without his advice; if they manage to kill the stupid thing by themselves, then they'll be ready for his assistance when it comes time to harvest the monster's body parts. If not, well, who really cares? Maybe next time they'll listen to him.

*To be a balanced NPC of his level, Willowquisp should have access to the following spells and equipment:
Possessions: Alchemist's lab, *+1 ring of protection, potion of jump, potion of spider climb,* three *potions of fire breath,* two *potions of invisibility,* two *potions of blur, potion of heroism, universal solvent.*
Spells: 3/3: from the following list: 0-level: *arcane mark, detect magic, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st-level: *charm person, message, reduce, sleep.*

RHIONDA the Swordmistress

Female human, 8th-level Fighter

Strength	14 (+2)	Fortitude Save	+6	Armor Class	13
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Reflex Save	+5	Flat-footed AC	12
Constitution	11 (+0)	Will Save	+2	Touch AC	11
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	NG		
Wisdom	10 (+0)	Speed	30 ft.		
Charisma	14 (+2)	Size	M (5 ft. 8 in.)		
Hit Points	49	Melee Attack:	+10/+5		
		Ranged Attack:	+9/+4		



Skills: Climb +7, Handle Animal +7, Jump +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Ride +10, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +2
Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)
Languages: Common, Dwarven
Possessions*: Rhionda wears a suit of black leather armor and a pair of *boots of levitation.* She keeps her favored weapon, a longsword, strapped to her back and wears a dagger in her boot. Rhionda owns a wide variety of magic longswords, although she carries only one on her at any one time.

Appearance: Rhionda the Swordmistress is an attractive young woman in her late twenties. She has auburn hair that she wears in a loose ponytail to keep it out of the way during combat. Judging by the reaction of several Monster Hunter wizards, she looks pretty darn good in her tight-fitting leather armor.
Background: Years before either of them became a member of the Monster Hunters Association, Rhionda and Buntleby were part of the same band of adventurers. They apparently got along well together and would probably still be adventuring together today had Buntleby not been called back home to inherit the Western Grove. Still, Fate must want these two together still, for their paths crossed again and Buntleby recommended Rhionda for admission into the Monster Hunters. Over Lady Ablasta and Dreelix's objections, Rhionda's field experience in hydra combat (and probably, no doubt, her good looks and feminine charms) won over both Grindle and Zantoullios.

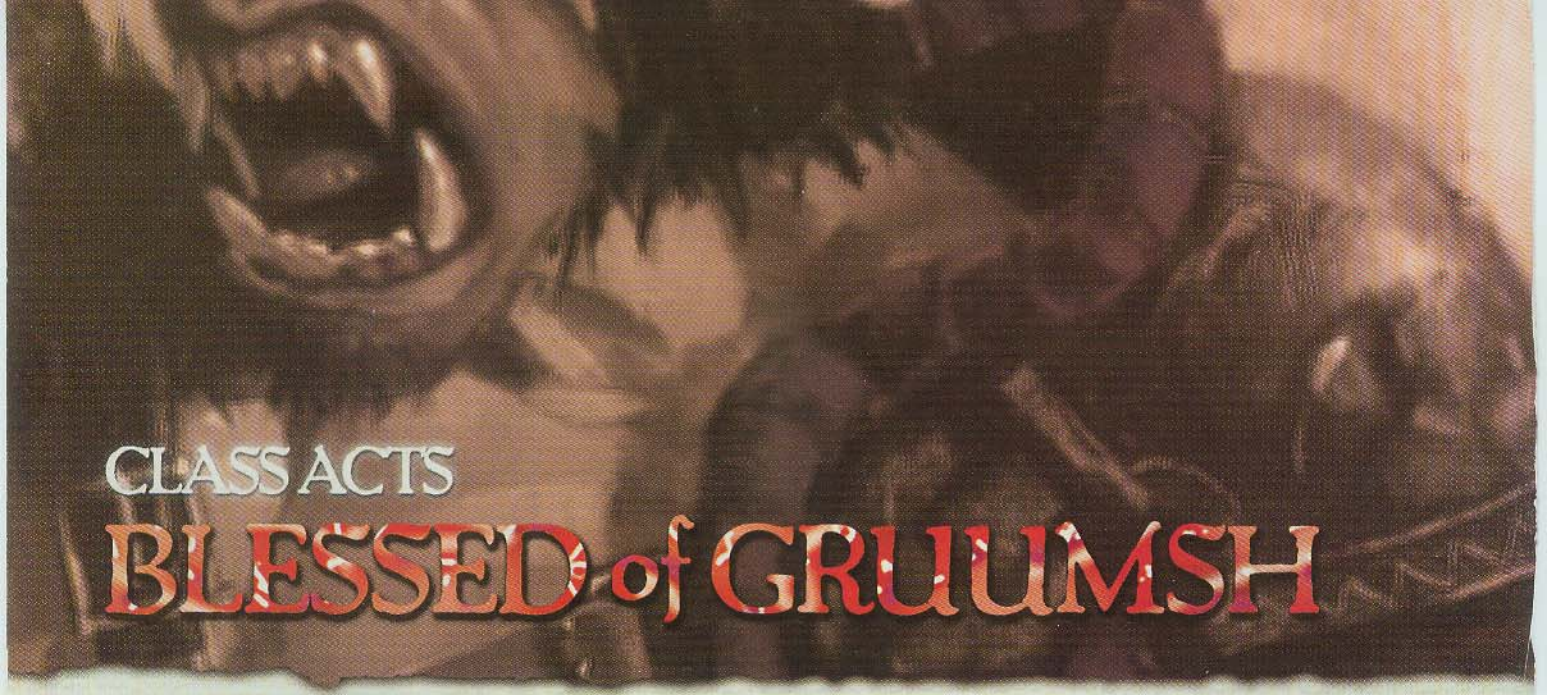
Rhionda is the youngest of the Monster Hunters and the Association's only fighter. She values magic items, especially magic longswords, although she seems well-versed in the uses of a wide variety of enchanted goods. No doubt in her adventuring career she's had the opportunity to wield a wide variety of such items.
Roleplaying Notes: Rhionda is a seasoned veteran of many battles. Her hard-won experience has given her a sense of accomplishment and the confidence to assert her own views to others, despite what they think of her. (Many, like Zantoullios, have a hard time believing that such a slim young woman can fight as well as she can.) Rhionda has met many types of monster on the fields of battle in her short lifetime.

Rhionda is occasionally impulsive almost to the point of recklessness, but she never tackles anything she doesn't honestly think she can handle. She cares little what others think of her and has been known to wield a tongue at least as sharp as her sword against those she truly dislikes.

In combat, Rhionda is a fearless entity swinging a bloody swath of death with her sword. Her fighting style depends solely upon her own skill; she does better fighting solo than she does in a large group. Once combat is over, she once again becomes the quiet, unassuming young woman that most people expect her to be.

Naturally, Rhionda's closest friend in the Monster Hunters Association remains Buntleby, whom she teasingly refers to as "Bunt." She seems familiar (no pun intended) with Ozzie as well; no doubt Buntleby acquired his osquip companion during his adventuring days with Rhionda.

*To be a balanced NPC of her level, Rhionda should not have her *boots of levitation* and should have access to the following equipment:
Possessions: mighty [Str 14] masterwork composite longbow, *+1 leather armor, +1 longsword,* twenty-five *+1 arrows, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of endurance, +1 cloak of resistance*



CLASS ACTS
BLESSED of GRUUMSH

by Monte Cook · illustrated by Scott Fischer

In a world of great magic and heroic deeds, even those more bestial humanoids have champions that wield great power. Witness the blessed of Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the orcs.

A blessed of Gruumsh is an orc or half-orc that enjoys the favor of his dark-tempered god. Each exemplifies all that is orc. He is always true to the ways of his race and lives by the words of his god. Masters of combat and intimidation, each is feared—and rightfully so.

Blessed of Gruumsh are most often fighters or barbarians, but they are clerics almost as often. Rogues and rangers also make good members of this elite group.

NPC blessed of Gruumsh are usually leaders among their people or lone, wandering champions fighting for their god's causes. Occasionally they work in very small, tight-knit groups, fighting surprisingly well together.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A blessed of Gruumsh is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, all types of armor, and with shields.

Divine Blessing: Gruumsh, it is said, watches over his blessed ones. Thus, each has a luck bonus to AC based on his blessed of Gruumsh class level. This is an extraordinary ability.

Fist of Gruumsh: At 2nd level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can inflict additional damage with any single attack. The amount of damage inflicted is +1d6 for levels 2-4, +2d6 for levels 5-7, and +3d6 for levels 8-10. Use of this supernatural ability must be declared before the attack roll is made. If the attack misses, that use of the fist of Gruumsh is wasted.

Evil Eye (eye of disdain): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 3rd-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with a range of 30 feet. A Will save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail suffer a -1 morale penalty on attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1 round per blessed of Gruumsh level.

Keen Eye of Gruumsh: At 5th level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can add a luck bonus to an attack roll for any single attack. The bonus is equal to the class level of the blessed of Gruumsh. Use of this supernatural ability must be declared before the attack roll is made. If the attack misses, the keen eye of Gruumsh is wasted.

Evil Eye (eye of fear): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 6th-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with a range of 30 feet. A Will save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail

THE BLESSED OF GRUUMSH

HIT DIE D10

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Divine blessing +1
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Fist of Gruumsh
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	*Evil eye (eye of disdain)*
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Divine blessing +2
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Keen eye of Gruumsh
6	+6	+5	+2	+2	*Evil eye (eye of fear)*
7	+7	+5	+2	+2	Divine blessing +3
8	+8	+6	+2	+2	Thunderous roar of Gruumsh
9	+9	+6	+3	+3	*Evil eye (eye of curses)*
10	+10	+7	+3	+3	Divine blessing +4, true orc

must run in fear as if affected by a *fear* spell cast by a sorcerer with levels equal to the blessed of Gruumsh's class level.

Thunderous Roar of Gruumsh: At 8th level, once per day, the blessed of Gruumsh can double the number of attacks that he makes in a given round while he bellows an incredible roar. If a character normally attacks with his orc double axe at +16/+11/+6 with an off-hand attack at +16, he instead makes six attacks at +16/+16/+11/+11/+6/+6 and two off-hand attacks at +16 each. The blessed of Gruumsh must be able to roar for this to work—it will not work within the area affected by a *silence* spell, for example. This is an extraordinary ability.

Evil Eye (eye of curses): Once per day, as a spell-like ability, the 9th-level blessed of Gruumsh can make a gaze attack as an attack action with his single eye with a range of 30 feet. A Fortitude save resists the effect (DC 10 + blessed of Gruumsh class levels + Charisma modifier), and those that fail are cursed as if *bestow curse* had been cast upon them.

True Orc: At 10th level, the blessed of Gruumsh can call upon his deity's might and speak in a commanding voice, uttering words in the true language of orcs—the very language that Gruumsh used to give birth to his children. These words inspire all orcs within 100 feet that can hear the words (including the blessed of Gruumsh), granting them +4 morale bonuses to attacks, saves, and skill checks for 1 minute per level of the blessed of Gruumsh. The character can use this spell-like ability once per week. D

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

The blessed of Gruumsh's class skills (organized by key ability) are:

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
Climb			Craft	Profession	Bluff
Jump			Knowledge (religion)	Spot	Intimidate

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a blessed of Gruumsh, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-good
Racial: Must be orc or half-orc
Base Attack Bonus: +6
Knowledge (religion) Ranks: 3
Feats: Weapon Proficiency (orc double-axe), Power Attack, Cleave
Special: In a ritual dedicated to Gruumsh, a character seeking to become a blessed of Gruumsh must remove one of his own eyes (to further embody the one-eyed god).

THE ECOLOGY OF THE PURPLE WORM

BY JOHNATHAN M. RICHARDS · ILLUSTRATED BY DENNIS CRAMER

Dreelix tapped his trusty gavel three times upon a handy flat rock. "This field session of the Monster Hunters Association is hereby called to order," he intoned. Then, with a practiced flourish, he slid the gavel into a pocket of his robes with one hand while pulling his rolled-up carpet of flying from his back with the other. A quick flick of his wrists and the carpet unrolled flat on the ground between the feet of the Conjurer Ablasta, Grindle the Coin-Counter, Zantoullios, and himself.

"All aboard that's getting aboard," he said, stepping onto the carpet before even finishing the sentence. The other three stepped on as one, leaving Buntleby and Rhionda standing together out of immediate reach of the carpet. "Looks like you two get the cheap seats again," Dreelix snickered.

"What a surprise," grumbled Buntleby. "I hope you at least cleaned out the portable hole since we used it to carry hydra parts over to Old Gumphrey."

Grindle stopped short in sudden shock, midway in the action of unfolding his portable hole. "I . . . meant to get around to it," he said lamely, plopping the now-open hole down onto the dusty ground.

A HIDEOUS STENCH ROSE FROM THE CONFINES OF THE HOLE, A STINKING MIASMA OF ROTTING HYDRA FLESH.

Immediately, a hideous stench rose from the confines of the hole, a stinking miasma of rotting hydra flesh. All of the Monster Hunters (save Grindle) screwed their faces into expressions of disgust; Lady Ablasta yanked her perfumed handkerchief from a puffy sleeve and held it over her nose.

"There's no way I'm crawling into that disgusting thing!" said Buntleby into his palm, which was currently covering both nose and mouth.

"Me neither!" agreed Rhionda from a similar position.

"Ugh, fold that nasty thing back up, Grindle!" demanded Dreelix irritably. Turning to Buntleby and Rhionda, he added: "Suit yourselves, then. But my carpet only seats four, as you well know. If you wish to be left behind, that's your business, but the rest of us have a date in a purple worm's lair!"

"Hold on," said Rhionda, as Grindle folded up his hole and stashed it in a pocket of his robe. "Do you have one of your polymorph self spells ready, Bunt?"

"Yeah."

"Well, no problem, then. Turn into an eagle or something and follow along."

"And what about you?"

In response, Rhionda fished into her pack and produced a slim line of silken rope. Tying one end around her slender waist, she tossed the other end to Grindle, who now sat cross-legged on Dreelix's carpet with his prodigious belly resting on his massive thighs. "Here, hold this," she said. Grindle complied, and Rhionda rose a couple inches off the ground, courtesy of her boots of levitation. "All ready here," she said. "You coming, Bunt?"

Buntleby frowned in frustration and began the words to his spell. By the time his features had melted into those of a giant eagle, Dreelix had lifted his carpet from the ground and was speeding along toward the mountains north of the city, pulling Rhionda behind like some airborne water-skier. Buntleby shook his head in amazement, flapped his wings, and followed swiftly in pursuit.

The miles flew by quickly. In less time than would have been thought possible, Dreelix dropped his flying carpet toward a fissure in the side of a mountain. Zantoullios cast a quick light spell on the tip of his collapsible staff as they entered, and Buntleby, seeing what was coming, did a quick aerial polymorph from giant eagle to tiny bat. Then the Monster Hunters were whizzing through underground passages, with Lady Ablasta shrieking in fear as Dreelix cut a few corners close and Rhionda whooping in delight as she was pulled aloft. Bringing up the rear was Buntleby in bat form, little wings flapping rapidly in an effort to keep up.

Passing through various connected underground caverns, Buntleby found himself dodging and swerving around low-hanging stalactites. Then Dreelix's carpet took a quick dive to the right, into a narrow, circular tunnel with smooth sides.[2] This new tunnel twisted and turned, eventually spilling out into an enormous cavern.

This, apparently, was their destination, for Dreelix slowed down the magic carpet and let it glide to the floor. "At least his landings are getting better," gasped Lady Ablasta, her hand to her heart as if ensuring that it hadn't burst in fright during Dreelix's reckless underground piloting. She shakily got to her feet with help from Zantoullios, while Grindle passed the rope back to Rhionda. "That was great!" she exclaimed with enthusiasm, untying the rope from her waist. "We'll have to do that more often!"

Buntleby flapped to the floor and resumed his normal form. He bent over to catch his breath, leaning heavily on Grindle. "Easy . . . for you . . . to say," he gasped. "You didn't . . . have to fly over here . . . on your own power."

"So where exactly are we?" asked Zantoullios, extending his glowing staff in all directions. The cavern was much too large for any but the tiniest section at a time to be illuminated by the power of his spell. "And where's the worm?"

"He must be out hunting,"[3] said Dreelix matter-of-factly. "But don't worry, he'll be back—and when he shows, we'll be ready for him!"[4]

"Maybe we can loot his burrow in the meantime, then!" suggested Zantoullios. "Uh, do purple worms keep treasure?"

"Not that I'm . . . aware of," said Buntleby, still catching his breath. He cast a light spell on a small pebble and used it to take a quick look around a portion of the enormous cavern.[5] "But it wouldn't hurt to look, I guess. Hey, look at this!"

Dreelix ran quickly to Buntleby's side, eyes darting greedily about in search of whatever treasure Buntleby might have unearthed. "What? Where? What?" he said, head turning this way and that.

Buntleby held out his shining pebble. "Look! An underground pool of water. Neat, huh? I thought I heard water dripping. I wonder how far out it goes?" The water extended farther than the range of the wizard's light spell, but he got the sense that it went on for some distance.

"Pshaw!" scoffed Dreelix and turned away.

Buntleby called Grindle over by the water's edge. "Hole," he demanded, holding out his hand. Sheepishly, Grindle passed it over. "Anything in here you don't want getting wet?" asked Buntleby.

Grindle unfolded the portable hole, reached in with one hand, and brought out his lengthy spear. "Spear," he said, placing it on the stone floor of the cavern, then reached back inside the extradimensional opening. When he retracted his arm it was

GAME NOTES

1 A purple worm lairs in underground burrows. Given the worm's enormous size, these lairs are often gigantic. There is usually only one entrance to the lair, dug by the worm itself, but this often branches off in several directions some distance from the lair.

2 Purple worms tunnel through packed earth and solid stone, leaving behind passageways the width of their own bodies. Dirt and stone pass through the worm's simple digestive system and are ejected from the body after the worm has extracted any nutrients from the substances. The round tunnels left behind are common near purple worm lairs, often crisscrossing and penetrating into pre-existing caverns. Occasionally, a purple worm's tunnel breaches the surface world. This effect benefits those dwelling in the Underdark, creating new air shafts.

Such is the worm's efficiency at burrowing that its speed remains constant whether crawling upon a flat surface or digging its way through the earth.

3 Purple worms are opportunistic hunters, chasing down anything edible that crosses their path, but they do not go out of their way to find living food, for they extract sufficient nourishment from the dirt and stone of their underground environments.

4 Despite Dreelix's use of masculine pronouns, purple worms are hermaphroditic, each creature having both male and female sexual organs. The male organs are several segments in front of the female organs, toward the front of the worm's body. This arrangement allows any two purple worms to breed: They line up their bodies in opposite directions and fertilize each other's internal eggs.

During the mating process, the worms produce a great amount of the slimy mucus their bodies normally exude. This thick coating actually adheres the worms to each other while they mate; the entire process often takes several hours. Afterward, each crawls away to its own lair, where it secretes its eggs wrapped in a mucus cocoon.

Purple worms mate only once a year.

5 Purple worms have no concept of treasure. Nonetheless, their lairs often contain riches, if one knows where to look.

As purple worms burrow through the ground, they swallow vast amounts of dirt and stone. In mineral-rich areas, a purple worm might also be chewing its way through veins of copper, silver, gold, or other valuable ores. These ores are ejected, along with other detritus, in the worm's castings. Purple worm castings look like piles of wet dirt and are commonly found in the worm's lair.

There are more dignified methods of striking it rich than digging through purple worm dung, but the end results are often worth it. Occasionally, items from devoured adventurers make it through a purple worm's digestive tract relatively intact; these might include rings, metal armor and weapons, and the like, but nothing easily digestible like scrolls, leather or cloth goods, and so on.

Finally, a purple worm's gizzard often contains several gems or other acid-resistant valuables that are used to help the creature grind up its food. These items are usually embedded in the walls of the creature's gizzard, so retrieving them is only possible after the worm has been slain.

carrying a small cloth bag. "Snack," he identified, then passed the hole to Buntleby.

"Is that it?" asked Buntleby, holding his nose to keep out the rancid stench of overripe hydra. Grindle nodded his assent while reaching into his snack pouch and pulling out a sticky pastry. Buntleby shook his head, made a face of disgust, and pitched the portable hole into the water. Bubbles leapt to the surface as the extradimensional interior filled with water. Rolling up the sleeves of his blue robe, Buntleby carefully folded the hole back up underwater and returned it to Grindle, who was busy licking his fingers clean after his snack. "I'd let the thing soak," advised Buntleby, to which Grindle replied with a grunt and a nod. "We can pour it out later, and hopefully we'll have rinsed out the worst of the smell." Grindle dropped it back into his pocket and continued licking the frosting from his fingertips. He reached back into the bag, then thought better of it and stashed it into another pocket for later.

WATER STREAMED FROM THE MOTTLED SURFACE OF ITS GLISTENING, ARMOR-PLATED HIDE.

Surprisingly, the rest of the Monster Hunters had actually been busy during this time. Buntleby looked on in appreciation as Rhionda positioned the wizards to best effect: Zantoullios and Dreelix stood side by side facing the worm-dug entranceway, through which, presumably, the purple worm would re-enter its lair. Behind them sat the Conjurer Ablasta, preparing a arcane eye spell. Rhionda stood behind her, overlooking the trio, ready to flash the longsword strapped to her back into action should the need arise. She held Zantoullios' glowing staff so the gangly wizard's hands were free for spellcasting.

"There you are, Bunt," she said as the young wizard approached. "Why don't you take up position here by Zantoullios, and Grindle can stand over there by Dreelix. You guys got your combat spells all ready?"

"Sure. How long do you think we have to wait?"

"No telling. But we'll be ready for it. With Lady Ablasta's arcane eye spell, we'll have a few moments' notice, so we shouldn't need to waste time with any hold monster spells. We oughtta be able to blast the thing before it's all the way out of the tunnel. You ready with that arcane eye yet?"

"Yes," sniffed Lady Ablasta. "I'll send it off down the tunnel as far as I can, and let you know when I spot

anything." She closed her eyes in concentration, and her magic construct flew down the passageway.

"Now, when the thing shows up, you guys hit it with everything you've got," said Rhionda. "We definitely want to kill it before it crawls all the way in here, so we don't have to worry about its tail stinger."

"Is it . . . dangerous?" Zantoullios asked, Adam's-apple gulping its way down his scrawny neck.

"Yeah, kinda," replied Rhionda. "Not only is it wickedly sharp, but it's coated with poison.[6] Best if we don't have to deal with it."

"Well, I wish the stupid thing would hurry up and show itself," grumbled Dreelix. "I'm getting tired of waiting. See anything yet, Lady Ablasta?"

"Nothing," she replied curtly.

As if on cue, a great surge of water spilled from the underground pool behind the Monster Hunters. Startled, they spun around to see what all the commotion was about.

It was a worm—the largest any of the wizards had ever seen. Water streamed from the mottled surface[7] of its glistening, armor-plated hide as it wriggled onto the stone floor of the cavern. Then it surged forth like an avalanche, mouth open wide in anticipation of a quick meal of bite-sized morsels. And what a mouth it was! Jagged teeth grew out from the same armor plating that covered the beast's body, curving together into a complex arrangement that met at the front of the creature's face. Buried behind thick ridges were four primitive eyes, two to a side, that glinted in the magical light spilling from Zantoullios' staff and Buntleby's glowing pebble.[8] A long spike jutted from the worm's lower jaw, pointing at the assembled Monster Hunters as if choosing the beast's next meal.[9]

Several things happened all at once. Dreelix bleated in terror

6 A purple worm's tail stinger deals piercing damage and forces the victim to make a successful Fortitude save (DC 24) or take 1d6 points of temporary Strength damage. Regardless of the result of the first save, the victim must attempt a second Fortitude save 1 minute later or take an additional 2d6 points of temporary Strength damage.

A purple worm causes 2d6+6 points of damage with its tail stinger.

7 Purple worms "breathe" through the pores of their skin. (In fact, they can only continue to do so as long as their skin remains moist, which is one reason they're seldom seen on the surface: Too much sunlight dries up their mucus coating.) They extract oxygen equally well from both air and water and can be found in either environment. While underwater, their skin takes on a mottled look as the water washes some areas clear of their mucus coating. In fact, for years it was believed that the "mottled worm" was an aquatic variety of the purple worm. That this belief went unchallenged for so long is not surprising, as few individuals could get within observing range of a "mottled worm" without becoming the creature's next meal.

8 A purple worm's four eyes are situated equidistant around the circumference of its head, with each eye pointing forward. Thus, the creature can only see what is directly ahead of it. Thick, bony ridges protect the eyes from the worst of the dirt and stones they're liable to come into contact with in an underground environment. The eyes have no lids, remaining open at all times—even when the worm sleeps. However, since purple worms have poor vision and rely primarily upon their tremorsense, they seldom awaken as a result of visual stimulus.

9 The prominent jaw spike is a feature possessed by the worm even before hatching. The spike is initially used to assist the worm in escaping from its egg; later, the worm uses it to loosen up the rock and soil where it wishes to burrow. While iron-hard and as strong as the creature's powerful teeth, the jaw-spike is not used by the worm as a weapon, as it isn't particularly sharp.

and scrambled backward, arms flailing wildly. He bumped into Grindle just as the heavyset wizard spouted off the final words to a fireball spell. Grindle's fireball was inadvertently sent screaming straight up to explode along the cavern's high ceiling and sent a cascade of stalactites plummeting down upon the hapless Monster Hunters. Zantoullios, meanwhile, sent a barrage of magic missiles streaming at the purple worm, while Buntleby grabbed up the conjurer Ablasta, still sitting motionlessly amongst all of the commotion. Ablasta's eyes were closed as she strained her senses through her arcane eye at the far end of the entrance shaft, oblivious to the impending danger barreling her way.

Rhionda just shook her head sadly and calmly pulled the longsword from her back, letting Zantoullios' staff fall to the ground behind her. She faced the approaching worm, ignoring the bumbling wizards behind her and giving her full attention to the fast-crawling monstrosity[10] that even now bore down upon her.

So when the stalactite-chunk dislodged by Grindle's spell whacked her on the back of the head, she was unconscious before she knew what hit her. Rhionda's sword clattered to the stone floor; her own limp form followed immediately thereafter.

The wizards ducked and dodged the sudden rain of ceiling-stone, stumbling away in a desperate attempt to avoid both the falling stalactite pieces and the monster worm. By the time Buntleby had pulled Lady Ablasta to her feet and out of relative harm, he was aghast to see Rhionda's limp body being sucked into the purple worm's mouth like a strand of loose pasta.[11]

Without thinking, Buntleby raced toward the creature, screaming to attract its attention.[12] Dreelix, in the meantime, had readied a fireball spell of his own, but Grindle saw that Buntleby would be in the middle of the spell's effect and jostled Dreelix's arm just in time. Dreelix's fireball went screaming into the underground pool, raising an explosion of steam. A fine mist of hot water sprinkled down over the area.

Dreelix turned to berate Grindle for making him miss his shot, but the expression on the heavyset wizard's face made Dreelix turn to see what had caught his attention. Buntleby had reached the monster worm and without a moment's hesitation dived straight into its open maw. "What in the Nine Hells does that idiot think he's doing?" cried Dreelix in consternation. "I'm not paying to have him raised!"

WITHOUT A MOMENT'S HESITATION HE DIVED INTO ITS OPEN MAW.

"Well, he's out of the line of fire now," pointed out Zantoullios. "So let's *get it!*"

As one, the remaining Monster Hunter wizards spilled deadly spells from their fingertips. Wave after wave of magic missiles, fireballs, Melf's acid arrows, and the like pummeled the monster worm, whose hardened skin had attained its uniform purplish coloration now that it had dried out.

Inside the creature's maw, Buntleby was unaware of the magical barrage as he concentrated on crawling deeper into the beast's gullet.[13] He regretted having left his light-imbued pebble outside in the cavern, but trudged forward blindly on elbows and knees nonetheless. Waves of peristalsis kept crushing him between the walls of the worm's digestive tract. He did his best to ignore it and pressed on. Finally, he reached his goal: His hand brushed what could only be Rhionda's slick leather boot. Crawling his way up beside her, he heard her moan and start to come to.

"Crap! What happened? Where are we?" she asked.

"We're, uh, quite literally worm food," remarked Buntleby dryly.

"Dammit, where's my sword? Maybe we can cut our way out of here."[14]

"Got an even better idea," said Buntleby, as he wrapped one arm around her shoulder and began the words to a teleport spell.[15]

The two disappeared from the belly of the worm and reappeared instantaneously in the creature's lair, near the entrance tunnel. Buntleby leapt to his feet and helped Rhionda unsteadily to hers, still woozy from the blow to her head. From that vantage point, they could see that the other Monster Hunters weren't faring so well. The worm had survived the onslaught of offensive spells and seemed little the worse for wear. It had dragged its entire body out of the water and coiled up like a rattlesnake. Now it struck at the wizards with both its toothy maw and its stinger-tipped tail. As Buntleby watched in horror, Lady Ablasta just barely dodged the creature's snapping teeth and rapidly scrambled in an unladylike fashion out of the creature's reach. Grindle, all out of combat spells and wielding his spear, wasn't quite as lucky; the worm's glistening stinger stabbed him in a meaty thigh.

Grindle stared down at his leg in astonishment. A small bloodstain began spreading around the wound, staining the robe along the edges of the rip made by the sharp stinger. Grindle's lip quivered in restrained fury. Methodically checking each armpit just to be sure—yep, just as he thought, no sweat-stains: Blast it, this *was* his favorite robe! He dropped his spear to the ground and stomped straight for the purple worm's retreating tail.

The tail struck out again, in a beeline for Grindle's massive form.[16] In a move many would have thought impossible, the heavyset wizard not only dodged the attack but swung a leg up and over the tip of the tail as it struck. Pinning the end of the worm's tail between his thighs, Grindle hooked his legs together at the ankles and grabbed the beast's stinger in both hands.

Sweat beaded on Grindle's forehead as he struggled with the worm's stinger. The creature raised its tail for another strike, lifting the 300-pound wizard into the air as if he weighed nothing, but before it could strike again Grindle gave a roar of triumph and snapped the stinger off in both hands.[17] When the worm's tail struck the ground near

Dreelix's suddenly retreating form, Grindle lost his grip, rolled off, and bowled into the Monster Hunter's President. Dreelix was knocked to the ground and half buried under Grindle's massive form.

By this time, the worm had diverted its attention back to Lady Ablasta. Its mouth opened wide and the creature reared up, towering over the skinny woman. Lady Ablasta skittered backward, eyes glued to the gargantuan beast looming above her. Her dainty boot caught on a rock and she toppled onto her bottom. Before the worm could begin its descent, she hastily conjured up a web spell and flung it at the beast's head. Fortunately, it anchored itself between the cavern's ceiling and the top of the purple worm's head; the creature's head dangled in the air, suspended by numerous layers of thick, fibrous strands.

"Brilliant targeting," said Buntleby, as he and Rhionda rushed over to help the Conjurer Ablasta to her feet. "But it probably won't hold him for long."[18]

"Not really all that brilliant, I'm afraid," replied the elderly woman. "I was aiming for his mouth, hoping to gum up those teeth of his."

Zantoullios took advantage of the worm's temporary immobility to pop off the last of his magic missile spells. "That's it for me," he said, trotting over to the others. "Can't tell whether we're hurting him much, though." Then, characteristically, he slipped in a glob of worm-slime and bonked the back of his head on the stone ground. He bolted back up to a sitting position with a puzzled expression on his face, looked around with a blank stare, muttered incoherently, then passed out on his back, bonking his head a second time for good measure.

Grindle trundled up, carrying an unconscious Dreelix under one arm. "Hit his head when he fell," he explained. "And I think I kinda squooshed him."

"We're getting our butts kicked!" remarked Rhionda with a snarl. "Anybody got any more spells?"

"I do," offered Buntleby, sending off a series of magic missiles that slammed into the thrashing worm's side.

Lady Ablasta rolled up her sleeves, exposing a selection of thin wands. She might have used up her spell inventory, but she was far from helpless. She selected her wand of magic missiles, recalled that it had gotten almost totally drained during their recent battle with a pyrohydra, and returned it to its sheath. Hmmm, let's see, she thought. Fear? Not likely. Ah, how about a couple of lightning bolts? Let's see what that stupid worm thinks about a bolt or two up his britches!

It was a nice thought, but one too late in coming. By the time Lady Ablasta had made her decision and slid the wand of lightning bolt from its sheath, the purple worm had pulled itself free from the web spell. It thrashed its body around, swinging its tail wildly. The edge of it slammed into the elderly conjurer's body, sending her flying one way and her wand sailing the other. She lay unmoving in a heap on the ground.

"Cripes, three down," muttered Rhionda, pulling a dagger from her boot. She looked at it for a second, then turned her gaze back at the worm, which was getting its bearings. The beast's pointed chin-spike aimed her way, and the creature began undulating in her direction, its toothed maw opening wide in anticipation.

"See to Zantoullios!" yelled Buntleby to Grindle as he rushed over to aid the Conjurer Ablasta yet again. Grindle grabbed the gangly wizard by the back of the collar and dragged him away from the approaching worm, as Buntleby scooped up Ablasta and headed that way himself. Rhionda, meanwhile, went straight for

10 Purple worms crawl in an undulating manner by expanding and contracting the bands of muscle that run the entire length of their bodies. While they have no legs, their armored skin is covered with numerous hairlike bristles, called setae, that act to grip the surface and pull them along.

11 A purple worm's primary attack is with its bite, which deals 2d8+12 points of damage and allows it to initiate its improved grab. If the grapple attack is successful, the victim is pulled into the worm's mouth. At that point, bite damage is automatic until the victim escapes or is swallowed into the gizzard.

Swallowing a victim is accomplished by making a second successful grappling attack on any round following the initial successful grapple. If this second grapple attack is successful, the victim ends up in the worm's gizzard, where he or she takes 1d8 points of acid damage plus an additional 2d8+12 points of blunt damage each round. To climb out, the victim must make two successful grappling checks against the worm (one allows the victim to reach the maw, the second to exit the mouth). Unfortunately the purple worm has a +32 to grapple checks, dooming most attempts to escape in such a fashion.

12 Not that screaming at a purple worm does any good, as the creatures are stone deaf. They can detect vibrations, though, so the tromp of Buntleby's boots on the stone cavern floor can be "heard" by the worm much better than airborne sound waves.

Purple worms enjoy feasting upon shrieker fungus, but they are attracted by their scent, not the shrieks they make. Purple worms have a fairly good sense of smell; they often find their way back to their lairs by following the scent of their own mucus trails.

13 A cross-section of a purple worm shows five distinct layers. The outermost is the creature's mucus-coated skin, from which the beast's setae emerge. The next layer is a ring of muscle that circles each of the creature's numerous segments. The third layer is a series of long muscles running the length of the worm, connecting each ring-muscle in sequence. These long muscles allow the purple worm to crawl by expanding and contracting its body in sequence. The fourth layer is a hollow space called the coelom (pronounced SEE-lum, for those who care about such things), which is filled with fluid and acts as a buffer for the innermost layer, the digestive tract. The coelomic fluid allows the muscles of the digestive tract to keep about the business of pushing food along despite the movements of the rest of the body.

14 A victim inside a purple worm's gizzard can elect to carve its way out rather than climb back out through the mouth. This can only be accomplished with natural claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. (This differs from the purple worm's description and is official errata. See this issue's "Sage Advice" for more details.) The gizzard of a purple worm is AC 20 and it takes 25 points of damage to carve a hole large enough to crawl out of. The hole is sealed up by muscular contraction shortly after being carved, so subsequent swallowed victims must cut their own exits.

15 Creatures swallowed by a purple worm are considered grappled and cannot cast spells with a somatic component, and any material components must already be in hand. Casting any spell requires a Concentration check (DC = 20 + spell level + damage dealt to the caster by the purple worm during the casting of the spell). *Teleport* has only a verbal component.

16 One of a purple worm's most useful senses is its tremorsense, which allows it to pinpoint the location of anything touching the ground within 60 feet of it. Of course, the best way to defeat a worm's tremorsense is to get off the ground, whether by flight magic, levitation, or something similar. If Willowquisp the Zoophile had been on hand for consultation, he'd probably have berated the Monster Hunters for not putting Dreelix's *carpet of flying* to its obvious use.

the advancing worm armed only with her dagger. The beast turned to face her. Seeing its response, Rhionda ran sideways, leading it further away from the others. She was confident that she could outdistance the worm for awhile, although she worried that she'd tire long before it would.

Buntleby dropped Lady Ablasta into Grindle's arms. "Here, look after them," he said, then turned to assist Rhionda against the worm. Grindle placed Lady Ablasta gently down upon the ground next to Dreelix and Zantoullios, all three out cold. He tried slapping Dreelix awake, to no avail. Then, with sudden inspiration, he removed the portable hole from his pocket and spread it out upon the ground next to the unconscious wizards. Cupping his hands in the water-filled hole, he dribbled some onto Dreelix's face.

That seemed to do the trick. "Pshyagh!" complained Dreelix. "That stuff stinks!"

Buntleby, meanwhile, was in pursuit of the worm; he snatched up Zantoullios' glowing staff in passing, but slid in a patch of worm-slime as he did so and fell to the ground, twisting his ankle in the process. Holding his sore ankle in one hand, he spouted off the words to his last magic missile spell, enjoying the sight of the streaking bursts of energy slamming into the worm's thick hide. That left him with a stinking cloud of questionable usefulness and two fireball spells that he didn't dare use until Rhionda was out of harm's way.

Rhionda splashed into the underground pool up to her ankles, then turned to face the worm. She feared that the creature would prove more maneuverable in the water than she was, and she didn't wish to find out for sure.[19] Instead, she applied one of her favorite maxims—when running out of options, go for the unpredictable—and charged the beast with her dagger.

Seeing this, Buntleby screamed in fright as he hobbled toward the beast on his one good foot. He cast his stinking cloud at the worm, hoping to at least distract it from Rhionda. But he needn't have worried; Rhionda, while often reckless, was no fool—as she came within touching distance of the worm, she bent her legs and jumped up for all she was worth.

With the aid of her boots of levitation, the jump took her straight up to the cavern ceiling. On the way up, she casually flicked her wrist and sent her dagger plunging deeply into one of the worm's beady black eyes.

SHE CASUALLY FLICKED HER WRIST AND SENT HER DAGGER PLUNGING DEEPLY INTO ONE OF THE WORM'S BEADY BLACK EYES.

"He's all yours, Bunt!" she cried from the safety of the ceiling, arms wrapped around a large stalactite for protection.

That was apparently true, for the purple worm, having lost track of its initial prey, turned to face Buntleby. The young wizard could see a stream of blood oozing its way down the creature's head from its wounded eye, but it didn't seem to faze the beast in the least.[20] As the worm snapped at him, Buntleby backed up, readying his first fireball spell but fearful of loosing it at this range. He hobbled back, the worm crawling after him. When he felt he was probably out of the range of effect, he cast the fireball, watching as it struck the creature in the head. "Got him!" Buntleby cried, excited at his success.

Then he noticed that the worm hadn't slowed its progress toward him, and he decided it was time to high-tail it again.

Grindle had succeeded at awakening the others with his "stinky water" trick when he saw Buntleby racing toward him with an awkward shamble-hop. "Get back!" Buntleby cried. "It's coming this way!" He peered over his shoulder and calculated the worm's distance: too close for his last fireball. Then he caught sight of the open portable hole, the water shimmering in the light of Zantoullios' staff.

"Into the water! Quick!" he yelled, turning to make a stand against the onrushing worm. "Quick!" he repeated, pushing Grindle into the water when he didn't move fast enough.

Dreelix and Zantoullios wasted no time diving into the hole; seeing Lady Ablasta hesitate at the indignity, Zantoullios grabbed her ankle with a bony hand and tugged her in as well. She sputtered and coughed when she surfaced, cursing Zantoullios in several languages none of the other Monster Hunters were aware she even knew.

By then, the worm was almost upon Buntleby, rearing up for a plunge-and-bite maneuver. The young wizard stood his ground, waiting until the last possible second before simultaneously falling backward into the "pool" and firing off the last of his fireballs. It went smack on target, past the rows of vicious teeth, down the creature's gullet, to strike somewhere inside the worm's digestive tract.

The explosion was incredible. Flames erupted throughout the worm's interior and shot out of its mouth like the dreaded breath of a red dragon. Buntleby missed the excitement, though, for while the flame shot over the Monster Hunters' heads he was spinning upside-down in the water-filled portable hole, doing his best not to get tangled up in the press of the other Monster Hunters' bodies. By the time he surfaced, the menace was over; the purple worm was dead.

"Hey, that was pretty impressive, Bunt!" said a familiar voice. Buntleby accepted Rhionda's proffered hand and pulled himself out of the water. Around him, the other Monster Hunters were doing likewise. Lady Ablasta, in sour humor, scowled at Zantoullios' offer of assistance and slapped his hand aside, crawling out of the portable hole on her own.

"What's that stink?" Rhionda asked suddenly.

"Us, no doubt," replied Buntleby. "We've been swimming in decaying-hydra washwater."

"No, it's not that. It's different," responded Rhionda.[21]

"It wasn't me," remarked Grindle,

looking over at Zantoullios. "I didn't do anything."

"Well, in any case, we got our worm!" enthused Dreelix, rubbing his hands together in glee. "It took some doing, but the Monster Hunters prevailed in the end!"

"And we were lucky at that," said Rhionda. "This was just a little one."[22]

"Regardless," replied Dreelix, looking in scorn at the simple-minded fighter he had been forced to allow into his prestigious organization. "The fact remains: Not even a purple worm can survive the magical onslaught of the Monster Hunters!"

"Well, I suppose we'd better start harvesting it," said Buntleby. "What do we want? Teeth? Blood? Digestive juices? Grindle, do you still have that stinger tip?"

"Uhhh . . . good question," replied Dreelix, scratching his head. "I suppose we should probably bring all that stuff over to Old Gumphrey, see if he can do anything with it. But all I'm really interested in is the thing's head. You, Rhionda, you're a fighter; go make yourself useful and cut that thing's head off with that sword of yours, there's a good girl."

"You want its whole head?" demanded Buntleby. "Whatever for?"

"You know that pompous windbag of a wizard, Quinquillian the Plane-Walker? He had the nerve to assert that the Monster Hunters wouldn't be able to handle a purple worm. Can you imagine? I told him that we certainly could too take down a purple worm, and he dared me to prove it. Dared! Me! I can't wait to see the look on his face when we show up and prove him wrong!"

"You mean—" began Buntleby.

"Tell me we didn't—" sputtered Zantoullios.

"I went through—" gasped the Conjurer Ablasta.

"Surely not even you—" started Rhionda.

Grindle, meanwhile, had pulled the small sack from his pocket and removed his soggy, frosting-covered pastry. He gave it a good squeeze to drain most of the water from it, then bit a good chunk of it off and chewed contentedly. "Huh?" he asked belatedly, mouth full, a puzzled expression on his face.

The other Monster Hunters ignored him and began arguing vehemently amongst themselves. Grindle shrugged his massive shoulders and returned his attention to the sticky pastry.

Finally Buntleby restored order. "All right, Dreelix, have it your way. Rhionda, go ahead and decapitate the worm if you can. Grindle, give her a hand, would you?" Grindle licked the last bit of frosting from his fingers and walked over to the dead worm.

"Oh, and Grindle?" asked Buntleby. "You still know the command words to Dreelix's carpet, don't you?" Grindle nodded, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Good," replied Buntleby. "You're piloting us home then. Rhionda, we'll let you ride on the tow line like you did on the way here."

"Great!" replied the young fighter, giving Buntleby a thumbs-up before slicing her sword deep into the worm's flesh.

"Wait a minute, what about me?" sputtered Dreelix.

"Oh, I haven't forgotten about you," replied Buntleby. "You'll get your worm's-head trophy all right, Dreelix—but you and it get the cheap seats on the way home!" D

17 Like the common earthworm, a purple worm enjoys a limited type of regenerative ability: It can regrow a severed head or tail (or just the tail spike) in about a week, provided that the cut occurs either in the first five body segments or the last twelve body segments.

A purple worm with one severed end still attacks with its remaining end: a tailless worm still bites; a headless worm still strikes with its tail spike. (Although a headless worm loses its vision, its tremorsense is based on organs spaced evenly throughout its skin, and the creature's brain consists of a long nerve that runs the length of its body.) Obviously, although a headless worm still has a digestive tract, it cannot "bite" or "swallow" prey, nor can it burrow new passageways through the dirt or stone. Generally, a purple worm in this condition curls into a ball and conserves its energy, awaiting full restoration after a week or so.

18 With a 35 Strength, purple worms enjoy a +12 modifier to Strength-related die rolls, so *web* spells are, at best, a temporary measure against them.

19 Even though purple worms can "swim," they habitually crawl along the bottom of the ocean (or lake, or underground pool) floor, searching for food. This is because their tremorsense allows them to detect creatures scuttling across the ocean floor, but they have a hard time fixing the locations of fish swimming through the water. Ocean-dwelling purple worms—mottled worms, if you prefer the term—can oftentimes be found far out to sea, exploring coral reefs and deep oceanic trenches alike.

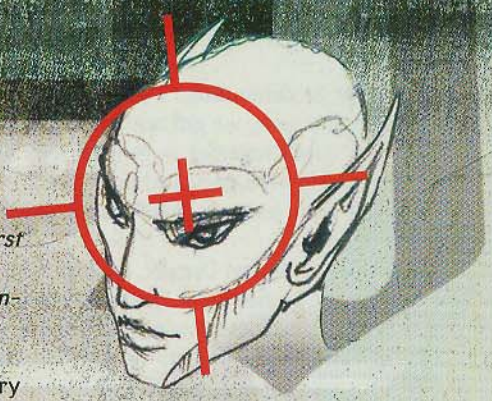
20 Purple worm blood is reddish, with a faint trace of purple to it. It is often used in the magical inks used to inscribe the arcane versions of *bull's strength, endurance,* and *mass strength.* (The latter spell is found on page 85 of DRAGON #275.) Purple worm blood is also often used in the creation of *manuals of bodily health.*

21 When seriously injured, purple worms exude a chemical that warns others of their kind away from the area for weeks. Many Underdark civilizations, knowing of this "warning scent," harvest the appropriate glands from immature purple worms and douse it around the entranceways to their subterranean cities to keep purple worms at bay.

22 The standard purple worm is a Gargantuan beast, 5 feet in diameter and around 80 feet long, with a Hit Dice range of 16–32. While not as common, purple worms occasionally grow into the Colossal range, with 33–45 Hit Dice. These Colossal worms have up to a 10-foot diameter and can grow to be 150 feet long. A 40-HD Colossal purple worm bites for 4d6+16 points of damage, causes 2d8+8 points of damage with its tail spike, and the DC for its venom is 39 (10 + half the purple worm's Hit Dice + the purple worm's new Constitution modifier). A Colossal purple worm causes 4d6+16 points of crushing damage per round to creatures it has swallowed.

VS. ELVES

BY STEPHEN KENSON



"The wild elf war-band was upon us in the night. I lost some of my men in the first volley of arrows before we even knew what was happening. We were just lucky that enough of us could see in the dark to counterattack. Those elves may be dangerous firing arrows from cover, but they're still no match for a strong sword-arm. Those that survived vanished into the forest. Still, I would never go into an elven forest again without being prepared." —Kos Gruul, half-orc mercenary

Elves can be quite territorial, guarding their forest homes from intruders. They have to be. In the past they've suffered raids from orcs, goblins, and other savage humanoids seeking elven treasure and elven skulls to decorate their lairs. Often outnumbered and facing enemies physically stronger than they, elves have learned to take advantage of their natural Dexterity, attacking at range from ambush, and using their intimate knowledge of the forest to their advantage.

Unfortunately, elven raiders and bandits have been known to take advantage of the same tactics used by elven hunting and scouting parties. They lie in wait in the shadows of the forest, striking without warning with their bows, then vanishing into the underbrush before their opponents can strike back.

Preparation

Elves are most likely to attack with surprise, using the cover of night and the forest to their advantage. They might even have *boots* and *cloaks of elvenkind,* granting them bonuses to Hide and Move Silently checks. They typically attack from a distance, using ranged weapons along with spells. The cover from the trees gives them AC and Reflex save bonuses, and concealment from foliage and darkness can provide a 20-40% chance of missing them entirely.

Prepare for Ambush: The key here is to sense the elves before they attack so they can't surprise you. Spells like *see invisibility* and *invisibility purge* are useless, because the elves are usually just hiding, not invisible. Focus instead on abilities that give you bonuses to Spot and Listen checks, and spells that improve the senses (like *darkvision*) or grant you forewarning (like *alarm*). Don't forget about the special abilities of animal companions or familiars; those with scent can pick up on hidden dangers long before you do.

Guard Against Ranged Attacks: The *protection from arrows* spell is very useful, giving you near immunity to typical elven archers. *Mirror image* and *obscuring mist* make it difficult to hit you, and the latter tends to confine combat to melee distance, which is just what you want. *Cat's grace* provides a Dexterity bonus that improves your AC.

Spell Selection: If you know you're likely to face elven opponents, avoid Enchantment spells (elves get a +2 bonus to saves against them) and *sleep* (elves are immune to it). Focus on spells with Fortitude saves to take advantage of the average elf's weak Constitution. Also consider lawful spells like *protection from chaos, magic circle against chaos,* and *shield of law,* as elves are often chaotic. *Magic missile* is a good spell since cover and concealment don't affect it.

Tactics

Close the Distance: Your first priority is to close to melee distance. This shifts the battle from Dexterity-based ranged attacks—where elves are strong—to Strength-based melee attacks. Once you close, elven archers have to drop their bows and draw their swords or risk attacks of opportunity. The Combat Reflexes feat might give you some extra attacks of opportunity. While the elves are scrambling to change weapons, you can strike.

Flanking: How do you close the distance? Your best maneuver is to try and flank the elves, coming at them from either side and giving you a +2 flanking bonus to your attack rolls. Of course, the elves aren't likely to allow you to flank them out in the open, and you're vulnerable to ranged attacks while you make the attempt. Try using the elves' advantages against them by staying low to the ground and using the foliage as concealment; spells like *obscuring mist* and *invisibility* work even better. Crouching or crawling halves your movement rate but gives your opponents -2 to hit you with ranged attacks, and foliage can give you one- to three-quarters concealment (and your opponents a 10-30% miss chance).

Once you're out of sight, you can use Hide and Move Silently to sneak up on your opponents in both directions. You might even want to deliberately let the elves hear one flanking group so they won't think to look for another one sneaking up on the other side. Put the rogues and other characters with high Move Silently scores in this second group, and keep the noisy, low-Dexterity characters in the first one. You could even split into three groups, leaving a decoy behind to keep the elves' attention and draw them out, while the other two move in to flank them from either side. If you're lucky, you can surround your opponents, giving you the advantage.

Slow Them Down: Look for ways to take away the elves' biggest advantage: their Dexterity bonus. *Color spray* can dazzle and stun, while *entangle* and *web* can turn the foliage and forest cover against the elves and limit their actions. *Faerie fire* is also a useful spell, not for slowing the elves down, but for negating their Hide abilities, leaving them clearly visible.

VS. ELVES TIPS

- Prepare for ambush: stay alert, and use spells like *alarm.*
- Close the distance as quickly as possible.
- Flank them when possible, forcing them to split their attention.
- Use spells and attacks that eliminate their Dexterity bonus.
- Avoid Enchantment spells; use spells that require Fortitude saves.

Your ultimate source for official D&D® adventures.

Dungeon®

96 pages of full-color adventures in every issue!

Adventures perfect for your campaign and suitable for all levels of play.

Bonus Side Treks and Maps of Mystery.

Exciting new look and fantastic original artwork.

Save 55% or more by subscribing now!

Fill out this form and mail it, with your payment, to the address below. **LIMITED TIME OFFER!**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov. _____

Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Method of Payment:

● Check ● Money Order ● MasterCard ● VISA

Credit Card Number _____

MC Bank No. _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

U.S. and Canadian subscribers, mail this card with payment to:
DUNGEON Magazine
Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
P.O. Box 469106
Escondido, CA 92046-9106
or Fax to: 619-738-4805

European Subscription Orders
kay.palmer@tnsofres.com

Australian, African, Asian, and South American Subscription Orders
dungeon@pcspublink.com

Subscription Type:
● New ● Renewal (enclose mailing label)

To U.S. Addresses
● 1 year (6 issues) for **$19.95 US**
● 2 years (12 issues) for **$35.95 US**
● 3 years (18 issues) for **$49.95 US**

To Canadian Addresses
● 1 year (6 issues) for **$29.95 US**
● 2 years (12 issues) for **$54.95 US**
● 3 years (18 issues) for **$74.95 US**

Subscribers in the U.S. and Canada will receive their first issues within 8 to 10 weeks.
All prices are subject to change without notice.

DMDA00

PC PORTRA

CURSES!
SORRY PHIL. MY COMPUTER IS ON THE FRITZ SO I HAD TO LAY OUT YOUR PAGE BY HAND. YEP, I'VE STILL GOT THOSE OLD PASTE-UP SKILLS!
-Pete

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIL FOGLIO

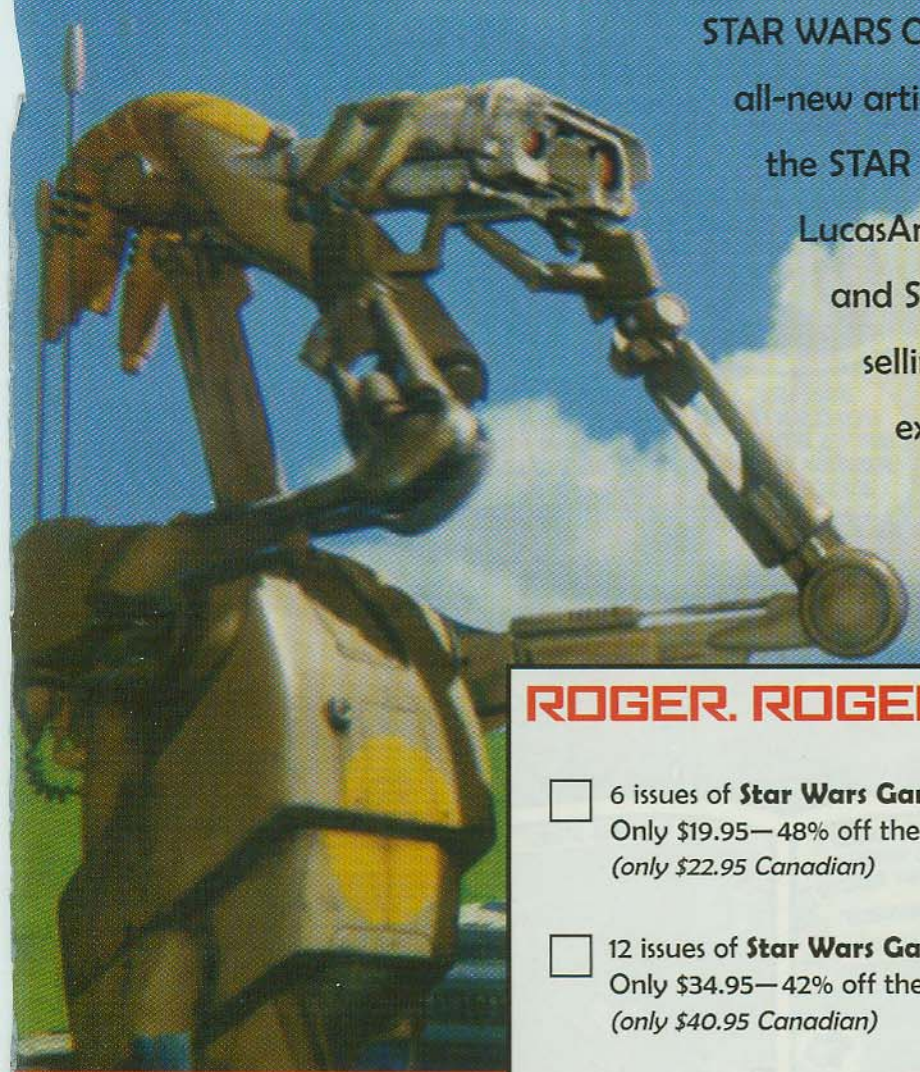
This month, the ancient red dragon cartoonist Phil Foglio (pronounced *Foh-Leeo*, or *Faux Leo*, if you prefer) gives us PC Portraits for those awful things that befall our hapless characters.

PASSPORT TO EXCITEMENT!

STAR WARS® Gamer

THE FORCE IN STAR WARS GAMING

The only magazine that puts you in the Star Wars Universe.



Every other month,

STAR WARS Gamer brings you all-new articles and adventures for the STAR WARS Roleplaying Game, LucasArts electronic game coverage, and STAR WARS fiction by best selling authors, all the while exploring new corners of the STAR WARS galaxy!

© 2000 Lucasfilm Ltd. TM

ROGER. ROGER. Sign me up now.

☐ 6 issues of **Star Wars Gamer**
Only $19.95—48% off the cover price!
(only $22.95 Canadian)

☐ 12 issues of **Star Wars Gamer**
Only $34.95—42% off the cover price!
(only $40.95 Canadian)

☐ Bill Me ☐ Check Enclosed
(US funds only)

Subscribe Today and Save 48%

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/ Country _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Mail to: P.O. Box 469122 Escondido, CA 92049-9122

WIZARD/WARRIOR WRASSLIN' FEDERATION
HELLO, GRUDGE-MATCH FANS! TONIGHT, IT'S A BATTLE TITANIC BETWEEN THE DARK DUDE OF DRAGONLANCE, RAISTLIN MAJERE, AND THAT FIGHTIN' SPELL-SLINGER FROM THE FORGOTTEN REALMS, ELMINSTER! WE'RE IN FOR FIREWORKS APLENTY, RIGHT, DAVE?
YOU BET, GARY! WE'LL BE BRINGING YOU ALL THE ACTION THAT OUR COMBATANTS CAN DISH OUT! LET'S MEET OUR ARCANE GLADIATORS...
RAISTLIN MAJERE: A MAN OF HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, HE ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF ANSALON'S SPELL-CASTERS TO CHALLENGE A GODDESS! HE'S STILL ON THE REBOUND FROM THAT DEFEAT, AND HE'S HOPING TO RECLAIM SOME OF HIS PAST GLORY TONIGHT!
BASICALLY, I WAS GIVEN THE CHOICE OF COMING HERE TO FIGHT OR REMAINING IN THE ABYSS AND HAVING MY INTERNAL ORGANS SERVED AT THE ANNUAL EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY PICNIC. WHY DO YOU THINK I SAID "YES"?
ELMINSTER: A LEGENDARY NAME IN MAGIC, HE'S THE LAST PRINCE OF A LOST NATION. HE'S SPENT MANY CENTURIES FURTHERING MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE, FIGHTING DARK FORCES AND DEFEATING EVIL WIZARDS! HE'S AS YET UNDEFEATED! WILL HIS WINNING STREAK END?
WELL, I OWE MUCH TO THE POWERS THAT MYSTRA, GODDESS OF MAGIC, GIVES TO ME. SHE BID ME COME HITHER TO DO BATTLE, SO I COULD SAY LITTLE BUT "AYE." I SUPPOSE I'M A LITTLE WHIPPED IN THAT RESPECT...
I'VE JUST BEEN HANDED SOME GREAT NEWS! OUR DEPARTMENT OF SORCERY HAS SUMMONED SOME CHOICE ITEMS FROM THE FUTURE. YES, FOLKS! TONIGHT'S BOUT WILL USE 8TH EDITION RULES! THAT MEANS SPELLS NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
SURE THING
GAMBLING & VICE
ODDS
BULLETIN +3
UM, DAVE? WHERE ARE THE 8TH EDITION BOOKS?
I SOLD THEM ON E-BAY.
I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE MATCH.
THEY WERE WORTH MORE IN MINT CONDITION. YOUR SHARE CAME TO $120,000.
AHEM... IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE READY TO START THIS MAGICAL MASSACRE! THERE'S THE REFEREE NOW!
OKAY, I WANT A GOOD, CLEAN, FIGHT. NO CANTRIPS, ARTIFACTS, OR SPELLS FROM THIRD-PARTY d20 LICENSEES—
KERZAP
FORSOOTH! WHAT DID YON HENCHMAN DO TO THEE?
I'M EVIL. GET OVER IT. NOW, I'VE GOT A TON OF AGGRESSION TO WORK OUT, SO PREPARE FOR PAIN!
"IT LOOKS LIKE RAISTLIN IS LEADING OFF WITH A CLASSIC: FIREBALL!"
"AND EL COUNTERS WITH POWER WORD: HALON! WOW! THE 8TH EDITION IS REALLY SHOWING ITS STRENGTH IN THE DEFENSIVE MAGICS!"
"UH-OH! MISTER MINSTER IS GOING FOR HIS KNIVES! AREN'T THOSE FOREIGN OBJECTS?"
"NOT IF THEY'RE SPELL COMPONENTS!"
"THEN GET ME A SPELL THAT USES UZIS!"
"THIS IS GONNA STING!"
"I DUNNO... COMPARED TO HIS STAY IN THE ABYSS, THIS'LL FEEL LIKE A LOVE TAP!
"WHOA! IT'S THE BACK AT YA, PUNK SPELL! THESE GUYS LEARN FAST!"
"LEARN OR BURN AS THEY SAY IN THE LOCKER ROOM!"

"COULD IT END HERE AND NOW?"
"I HOPE NOT! WE'RE PAID BY THE HOUR YOU KNOW!"
WHAT?! I PACKED THOSE BLADES WITH ENOUGH MAGIC TO FILL A PIERS ANTHONY SERIES!
I'M ONE OF MYSTRA'S CHOSEN, FOOLISH ONE! NAUGHT CAN DEFEAT ME WHILE SHE DOTH GUARD MY LIFE!
IS THAT SO...
INSTANTLY, ON MYSTRA'S HOME PLANE...
WHO ARE YOU?
DELIVERY SPELL, MA'AM. I'VE BEEN SUMMONED TO DROP OFF THIS HOME THEATER SYSTEM AND A CRATE OF LEONARDO DiCAPRIO MOVIES.
LEON DICAP
TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME, DARK ONE...
ELMINSTER'S WEAVE PIERCES TAKHISIS' LAIR IN THE ABYSS...
UNENDING DEATH IS TOO GOOD FOR HIM...
AS SOON AS MY TEFLON TALON POLISH DRIES, I'M GOING TO DIP HIS SOUL IN BATTERY ACID!
CONNECTING... 2048 Bps 5min 45sec
AOL
Ansalon On-Line
I thought you'd like this— Raistlin
SHE'S GOING TO RIP THEE A NEW ONE.
I'M NOT BEATEN YET! I'M BRINGING IN MY TAG-TEAM PARTNER, DALAMAR!
THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO GATE IN FOR?!
HELP ME VANQUISH THIS CRETIN!
YEAH, RIGHT. YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU TAKE HIS LUNCH MONEY AFTER YOU TREATED ME LIKE DIRT FOR YEARS?
LOOK, I'M SORRY ABOUT THE BURNING HANDPRINT ON YOUR CHEST... IT WAS A SIGN OF AFFECTION, REALLY! LIKE A TATTOO!
KISS MY EARS, YOU GOTHIC JERK! I'M OUTTA HERE!
'TWOULD SEEM THOU ART OUT OF TRICKS, LITTLE MAGE!
NOT WHILE I HAVE THIS!
"WHOA! FOR THOSE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THIS GUY, HIS POWERS INCREASE WHEN THE MOON OF BLACK MAGIC, NUITARI, IS IN ASCENDENCE! RAIST IS USING AN OLD SPELLFIRE CARD TO GAIN AN EDGE!"
"ISN'T THAT ILLEGAL? WHERE'S THE REF?"
"HE WAS DESTROYED BEFORE THE FIRST ROUND, REMEMBER?"
"OH, YEAH. THAT WAS FUNNY!"
HOLD! YOUR TREACHERY SHALL NOT STAND!!
"HOLY COW! IT'S THE SAGE!"
"SKIP WILLIAMS? HE ACTUALLY DRESSES LIKE THAT?"
THIS IS A MAJOR RULES VIOLATION!
HA! WELL MET, FAIR SAGE!
CAN IT, SHAKESPEARE! YOU COMMITTED AN ILLEGAL USE OF DIVINE INTERVENTION. I DON'T SEE "CLERIC" ON YOUR RESUMÉ!
WOMAN TROUBLES, EL-LOSER?
SORRY FOLKS, BUT THIS MATCH IS POSTPONED UNTIL WE CAN RE-SANCTION IT AS FAIR. I'D DO IT NOW, BUT SOMEONE SWIPED MY 8TH EDITION BOOKS...
WHAT A SHAME.
WE NOW RETURN YOU TO YOUR TICKETS TO ARUBA—I MEAN, YOUR MAGAZINE... BYE!

THE PLAY'S THE THING

WHO PLAYS YOU IN THE MOVIE?

BY ROBIN D. LAWS
ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN KOVALIC

YOU | I adopt a disguise and go around the town trying to hear gossip about myself. I want to know if anyone suspects it was me who crashed through the temple window and broke the altar.

DM | That sounds like a good plan. How are you going to know if it's you they're talking about?

YOU | What do you mean?

DM | Well, you're new in town, so they won't know your name.

YOU | I sure hope not!

DM | So if someone does know it was you, they'll have to describe you by your quirks or physical appearance or whatever. But so far we haven't established what those are. So what do you look or sound like?

The "Description" chapter in the *Player's Handbook* provides you all sorts of guidance for making your PC distinctive. But let's face it, sometimes we give that part short shrift when we're anxious to get a new character generated and into an ongoing game. Or we might be creating a new character and find ourselves in need of sudden inspiration. Sometimes everything about a character comes to you right away, but on other occasions you'll need to give your imagination a head start. Maybe you find yourself creating the same type of character every time, and you want to break the mold.

Here's a solution to each of those problems: Go Hollywood, and cast a well-known actor in the role!

The biggest movie stars all have one thing in common. They have simple but powerful personae that they carry with them from one role to the next. Harrison Ford is the long-suffering, thoughtful hero. Sylvester Stallone is the big lug. Sharon Stone is the icy-cool beauty who possesses an aura of power. Clint Eastwood is the narrow-eyed, stoic dispenser of righteous violence. John Wayne was the no-nonsense, fatherly man's man.

Actors don't always play the same role, of course. For our purposes, it's easier to find an off-the-rack heroic persona to swipe by looking at an actor's action-movie roles.

You can focus on one role, like Sigourney Weaver in the *Alien* series, or on the general type of part the actor tends to get cast in. The working-class underdog Stallone from *Rocky* is different from both the machine-gunning uber-warrior of *Rambo* and the tongue-in-cheek supercop of *Demolition Man*.

The better you know your movies, the greater your range of choices: You can branch out from stars to character actors. Your nervous thief character takes on a whole new dimension when you picture him as Steve Buscemi (*Reservoir Dogs, Fargo*). His mournful features and skinny physique make him perfect for the weaselly or put-upon roles he usually plays. A sorcerer character based on a scathingly witty performer like Chris Rock will display traits far different from those usually associated with that class.

If you're a fan of older movies, you can choose inspirations for your characters that your fellow players are unlikely to identify. Actors during Hollywood's classic studio era stayed even closer to their personae than contemporary performers, in part because teams of writers were assigned to create vehicles designed specifically for the popular images of popular stars. Everybody will notice if you do a Humphrey Bogart or Jimmy Stewart impression, but characters based on Joan Crawford, Kirk Douglas, or Barbara Stanwyck are unlikely to raise any eyebrows. This author once had the pleasure of perplexing D&D design team member Jonathan Tweet by basing a character in a game he ran on Walter Brennan, who played the crotchety old coot in nearly

two hundred movies. You might not know his name, but you probably know his face and gloriously cracked voice.

That confession aside, your goal in most games is to conceal the source of your inspiration. In an ongoing game played for anything other than laughs, you won't want to distract your DM and fellow players with an obvious and corny impression of a popular celebrity. If do you that, your PC won't seem real, and your dialogue will break suspension of disbelief. Just as a good DM describes a monster instead of simply giving you its name or pointing to the *Monster Manual,* you should provide a description of your chosen actor. Say "a handsome young man with open, trusting eyes and a mane of dark, shaggy hair," instead of, "he looks like Keanu Reeves."

(This is not to say that DMs should avoid basing NPCs on popular actors, underlining the point with broad vocal impressions. The rules are different for NPCs. DMs have to play lots of different characters in short succession, and need all the help they can get in differentiating them. An obvious impression provides you with an instant memory tag for the character: "Oh, yeah, the gambler at the inn—he's the one who sounds like Jack Nicholson.")

Choosing an actor to play your character provides you with more than just a physical description and a basic personality. It can help you out when you get stuck during play, especially if you've chosen a performer who's been in a lot of action movies or played a classic heroic character. When you find your character in a tough situation that's got you stumped, stop to ask yourself what the character would do if this was a movie. "What would a Sean Connery character do here?" you might ask yourself. Well, thinking of Bond, you'll figure that he'd suavely inject himself into the middle of a dangerous situation, confident that his wits (and secret gadgets/magic items) will serve to get him out of it.

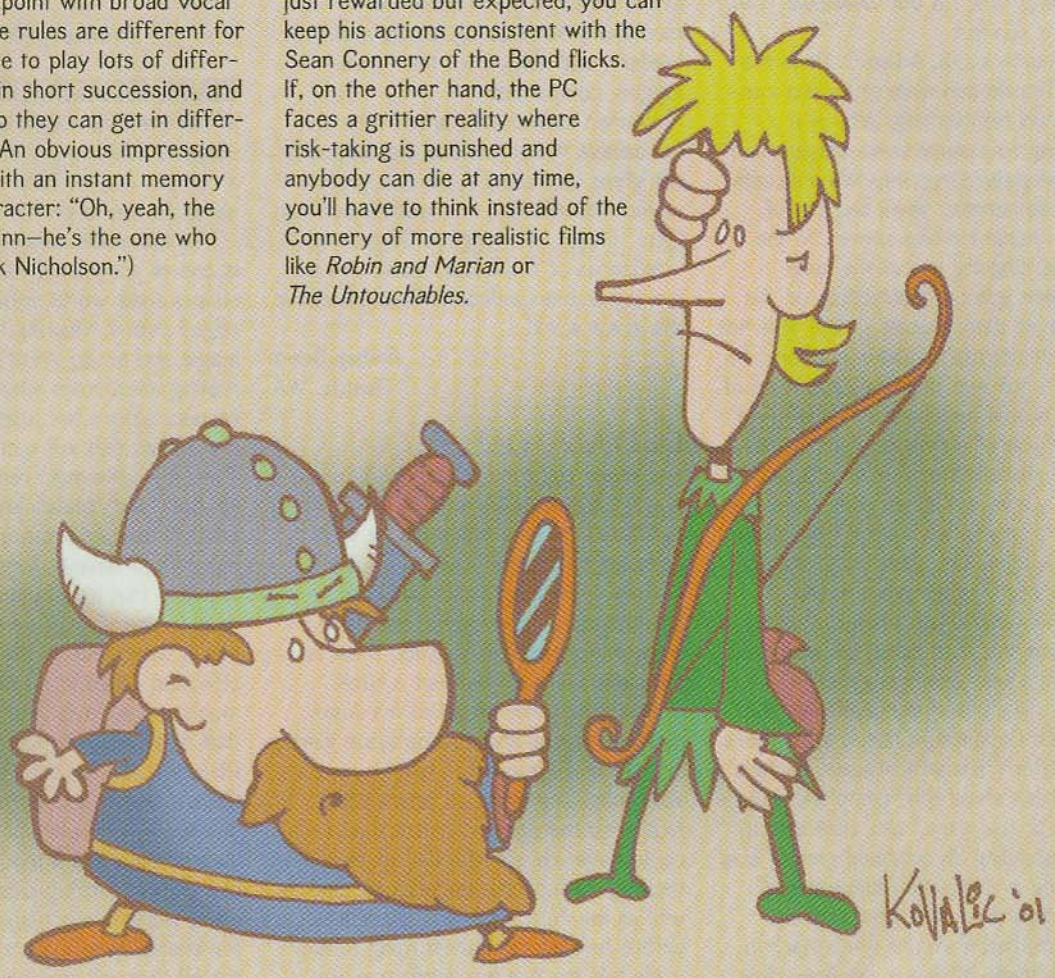
Expect to change your PC's behavior based on the world created by the DM. If he operates in a setting where swashbuckling and daring-do are not just rewarded but expected, you can keep his actions consistent with the Sean Connery of the Bond flicks. If, on the other hand, the PC faces a grittier reality where risk-taking is punished and anybody can die at any time, you'll have to think instead of the Connery of more realistic films like *Robin and Marian* or *The Untouchables.*

Because you've concealed the inspiration for your PC from the others, you can easily develop him so that he eventually becomes his own person, gradually dropping the basic traits of the actor you originally based him on. Identification with an actor should be a starting point, not a limitation. But as a starting point, you'll find it works celluloid wonders.

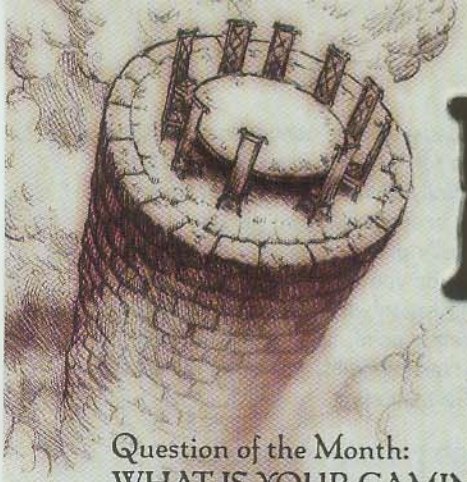
YOU | **Anyone who describes Makethian will note his prematurely snowy hair, his loud voice, and his rapid, tightly controlled gestures, which he uses to try to rein in his natural clumsiness.**

(thinking to yourself)

Yes, that Makethian is one wild and crazy guy . . . D



"I DUNNO... AM I MORE OF A GRIFFON DUNNE TYPE, A JEREMY IRONSGOLEM TYPE, OR A JENNA ELFMAN TYPE?"



FORUM

Send email to: forum@wizards.com
"Forum" c/o *Dragon Magazine*
1801 Lind Ave. S.W. • Renton, WA 98055

Question of the Month: WHAT IS YOUR GAMING ENVIRONMENT LIKE?

HE/SHE SAID

As a woman gamer, I am pleased and excited about the new (dare I say improved?) gender-equal D&D. I'm also puzzled by the weird letters complaining about the pronoun "she." Hey, guys, women play this game too! We like seeing "she" in our *Dungeon Master's Guides*!

In *Dragon* #278, Adam C. finds the use of female and male pronouns confusing and disorienting. Why is it confusing to assume some players and DMs are girls? Drop into Wizards.community sometimes; you'll see lots of women there! He also states, "In the past, the singular use of the male descriptor was not distracting, as this was a male demographic game." It is not a male demographic game anymore. I'm sure if a poll was taken, a good third of gamers would be women. And we find the sole use of a male descriptor distracting—it makes us feel unwelcome in a game we love. I agree with Adam that the use of a gender neutral descriptor would be ideal, but since no grammatically correct option exists in the English language, you'll have to either get use to "he" and "she," or we'll have to invent a new one (I suggest "e").

I was still shaking my head over that one when I opened *Dungeon* #84. There was a letter from a Mr. Russell Nichols complaining about the "complete feminization of the game." Um, how exactly does discarding an outdated gender bias constitute a "complete feminization?" Mr. Nichols then complains that an adventure had a woman lumberjack in it, which made it hard to swallow. How (he asks) can there be a girl logger in an adventure, when "a woman lumberjack is a rarity in our society today?" When was the last time Mr. Nichols saw a dragon? I feel dragons are more of a rarity than a woman lumberjack; ergo, they should also be removed from D&D. Why is it easier to believe in magic than equality?

Just for argument's sake, I emailed the Washington Association of Contract Loggers, asking how many women lumberjacks there were. They kindly emailed me back with a boatload of articles written about women in logging. They also wrote that while relatively few women actually work cutting trees in the forest, a great many work machinery such as log trucks and loaders, and many own their own logging companies.

Women lumberjacks aren't rare, but we believe the erroneous message society gives us from TV, movies, and magazines—namely, that women don't do "guy" things. Like logging. Or gaming.

Wizards of the Coast, thank you for making women welcome. Please keep up the great work!

Amber Scott
Seattle, WA

D&D AND DAD

The other night my friends and I were playing our weekly game of D&D when my father asked if he would be welcome to watch and listen in on the session. We thought this was reasonable, honored his request, and aside from the occasional question from him, the game went off without a hitch.

After the game he asked me some more questions about roleplaying games in general. Fortunately I had issues of your magazine that had articles that explained the process better than I could have. He spent a day or two reading through the material at hand as well as my *Hero Builder's Guidebook* before he said the oddest thing to me.

He told me that my generation was pretty lucky, that when we reach the age at which his generation will be playing Bridge and Bingo, ours will be crossing vast landscapes and slaying giants.

I never thought about my gaming future before. Perhaps one day we might have seniors leagues, and veterans like us will still be doing the dungeon crawl while other people are piloting their wheelchairs to the prune buffet.

I believe my father was right: We are lucky that we are gamers, and although I have yet to convince my father to participate in a game, many of us are lucky to have such understanding people close to us.

Able DuSable
Winnipeg, Manitoba • Canada

ELVES IN ACTION

In the latest *Dragon* Magazine, featuring elves as the primary subject, there was a call put out for help on roleplaying elves. I'd like to give a few insights.

The incredible longevity elves enjoy is one of the primary influences that shapes their world view. It is a double-edged sword, allowing them to bring magic and art to great heights, yet separating them from other races. They respect nature because it one of the few things that will outlast them. Therefore, the main reason elves seem so aloof and condescending is not just cultural bias; it is also a defense mechanism. They *have* to keep their distance, knowing that as a human, you will be dead in the blink of an eye. This situation is analogous to the degree of affection given to a family pet. As much as you love your dog, you know that he won't live much beyond ten or fifteen years. By comparison, though there's always a chance of accident or disease laying your spouse low, it isn't an automatic truth that you will outlive him or her. Making close bonds with other races is mortgaging the future for instant gratification. Rare indeed is the elf that will give his heart to a human, opening himself up for hundreds of years of misery when the human partner dies.

Roleplaying a tolerant, unbiased elf means walking a fine line between being

patient and patronizing. You probably have at least a hundred years more "world experience" (if not experience points) starting out at 1st level than the rest of your adventuring companions. All things equal, you will almost certainly gain more knowledge than the rest of them put together. This can lead even the best-intentioned elf to treat non-elven companions like "noble savages," small children, or even that beloved family pet. (Then they wonder why nobody appreciates their efforts to better the lives of those around them.)

The secret to keeping this balance is to realize that years and experiences are *not* equal. An elf must remember that the warrior to her left might have "lived" more in his twenty years of chaotic battle than she has in her two hundred years of quiet, routine study. This revelation might take years of roleplaying, or it can happen in a flash of insight, but it makes the difference between an annoying, condescending busybody with clerical spells and a wise, respected priestess.

Amy Dickinson
San Jose, CA

BEWARE THE DEATH SQUADS

Although I have been playing the 2nd Edition game for about five years, I have always felt that I have never completely grasped the rules. Maybe it was because I was playing "catch-up" with the other members of the gaming group (some of whom had been roleplaying for twice as long as me), but I never felt completely comfortable with the arbitrary decisions they made. And, although AD&D was inarguably the best system around, other games, like *Deadlands,* showed the gaping holes in certain places in the rules.

The arrival of the new edition has revitalized my interest in the game and encouraged new campaigns to begin from the three DMs in our group. Sure, the new edition has its flaws (longer character generation and an absolutely atrocious XP system open to widespread abuse and cheating; one campaign of it, during which the PCs achieved 18th level in less than twenty sessions, and it was hurled out in favor of the 2nd-Edition system), but overall it increases the pleasure to be had out of the game. Spellcasters are no longer walking arrow targets at 1st level, clerics are more than medics, and turning your back on a rogue is now a very, very bad idea. Indeed, the versatility of the new rules has encouraged us to do things we'd never have considered under 2nd Edition, such as playing monks, multiclass characters, and even halflings. If the new psionic rules are as straightforward, then they too will be incorporated.

Now to the main point of this message: Why are so many D&D players whiners and moaners who start crying if they don't get their own way? I read in disbelief a couple of months back a letter from a bloke who felt he'd been stabbed in the back by the change in rules. Well, don't play the new edition then. Last time I checked, Wizards of the Coast wasn't sending death squads out to reclaim all 2nd Edition rulebooks and execute DMs refusing to switch systems. If you think 2nd Edition is better, just keep playing it. The *Conversion Manual* can be used in reverse if you find a 3rd Edition rule you want to convert to 2nd, so new D&D material can still be bought and used. It isn't the end of the world.

Even worse was a letter in the last issue I bought whereby a player suggested that *DRAGON* stop covering the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting because he doesn't like it. Tough. The Realms have sold millions of novels and computer games and brought thousands of new players to the game. I would never have played D&D in the first place if it hadn't been for the *Eye of the Beholder* computer games and the Icewind Dale novels piquing my interest about the game. The Realms are a D&D campaign world and should thus be included in a magazine that is about the D&D game. Sure, the Realms aren't 100% convincing as a campaign setting, but they're fun to play. I don't particularly like the GREYHAWK setting (too boring), but I would never demand that *DRAGON* stop covering it.

Glad to get that off my chest. Well done to Wizards of the Coast for producing a top-class update of a classic game. Long may it continue.

Adam Whitehead
Colchester, Essex • Great Britain

ROLE MODELS

PAINTING SKIN TONES

BY MIKE MCVEY

One of the most useful weapons in the miniature painter's armory is the ability to paint flesh tones convincingly, and in many cases a miniature will stand or fall on how these tones are portrayed. Many otherwise subtly painted miniatures are ruined with "fake-tan" skin tones. If painted with a little sensitivity to the subject in hand, flesh tones can lend realism to a miniature—be it a pale-skinned sorceress or a ruddy-faced dwarf. This month, we're going to have a look at some easy ways you can bring some real character and life to your miniatures.

Considering Color

In previous articles, we have looked at the techniques used to create certain effects—how the paint is applied to the model. This month we are going to start by looking at how important the chosen colors are to the finished effect. Think of it this way: It really doesn't matter how well the highlighting and shading of the flesh areas is executed—if the colors and tones are incorrect, the finished effect won't be right. It's an area of miniature painting that requires thought and subtlety.

Consider the character you are about to paint: What flesh tones would suit it? Not just the racial type, but also the class—maybe she's a barbarian whose skin is dark and weather beaten, or a pale wizard who spends her time cooped up inside a library researching ancient tomes. By spending a few minutes thinking you can bring more character to your painting.

One of the earlier articles in this series talked about using reference when painting your miniatures—this is especially useful when it comes to flesh tones. If you are painting a character, look at the racial description in the *Monster Manual;* you should find a couple of lines to get you started. Then take a look at any artwork you can find that matches what you are working on. Look at the range of tones that the artist used on the flesh to achieve a certain look. Obviously you are working with a far smaller canvas, but there is a lot you can learn and apply to your miniatures. You will find there is a big difference between the light, clean tones of an elf and the grimy, unhealthy pallor of a troll. Paintings are usually more useful than photographs, as the different tones are easier to pick up, and the effects are more exaggerated.

Practicalities

It's easy to tell you to consider the effects you want to achieve, but how do you actually make them a reality? Lets look at some examples. We'll start with a basic caucasian skin tone. Other natural skin tones can be attained using the same simple techniques.

1. **Base coat:** With light skin tones it's best to work over a white undercoat. Use a deep chestnut color for the base coat, but if it's too bright add a little

brown or tan to the mix to take the edge off. It's important to get good solid color here: If the base coat is patchy, the skin will end up looking messy.

You can also use black for an undercoat. This gives good color stability, though the colors end up a little muted.

2. **Highlighting:** Because the base coat is quite dark, most of the work is done with the highlights. Add a little of the base color to a standard flesh tone to give it a little more depth, then paint this color over most of the exposed skin areas. It's good to leave the base coat showing in the deepest recesses of the muscles and where the skin meets the surrounding areas. The rest of the highlight colors are created by adding white to this color mix. Use two or three highlight colors on mid-tone flesh and apply the highlights to the contours of the muscles. Try not to make the highlights too harsh. Skin is soft and matte, so the highlights need to represent this.

3. **Shading:** When the highlights are complete, take a minute to look at the miniature before you start shading. When you begin with a deep base color, it's possible that you won't need to shade the tone. Hold the miniature at arms length to see how the skin contrasts with the clothing around it. If the colors blend together, try running a little deep brown into the areas where they meet. This needs to be done with subtlety, but it can make an enormous difference.

Variation

The description above is the basic formula you can use to paint the flesh on your miniatures. By altering this formula slightly, you can get some really great effects. Try adding a tiny bit of green to the base color—you'll find that it really takes the edge off the brightness and you can get some very realistic looking tones. By adding a bit more, you can create a great effect for undead! You can take this effect even further by adding small quantities of purple and blue to the shading colors to give a vivid bruised effect.

Different races can be painted by altering the basic formula. Dwarven skin is ruddy and tanned, so try adding a spot of red to the base color and keeping the highlights a little more muted. Elves are pale skinned, so mix flesh tone into the base coat, and take the highlights a couple of stages lighter than normal.

Of course, there are more variations than discussed here—just think of the variety of skin tones in our world and how you could achieve them on your miniatures.

The key is experimentation—don't get stuck in the rut of painting flesh the same way on every miniature. Be brave and try something new. You might mess up, but as soon as you get one right you will transform what would have been a normal miniature into something with real character.

Next month we are continuing on the same theme by looking at how you paint the focal point of the miniature: the face.

SAGE ADVICE

Need some help with your game?

by Skip Williams (thesage@wizards.com)

THIS MONTH	SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO
The sage begins with an update to some old advice. Then, it's on to consider combat in the D&D game and questions arising from the recently released Sword and Fist *book.*	"Sage Advice," *Dragon Magazine* 1801 Lind Avenue S.W.; Renton, WA 98055

I understand that there is some official errata on *polymorph* spells and on the *shield* spell.

New text for the *polymorph other* spell appeared in issue #280 (page 45). There is an official change to the *shield* spell as well. The spell grants you a +7 cover bonus to Armor Class, not 75% cover as the spell description in the *Player's Handbook* says. Note that this invalidates the Sage's comments about the *shield* spell's effect on attacks of opportunity in issue #280. A *shield* spell does not negate attacks of opportunity against the user. The rest of the commentary on the *shield* spell in #280 remains valid.

The illustration of the repeating crossbow on page 101 of the *Player's Handbook* seems to indicate that this weapon can be fired only with two hands, but there's no mention of this in the weapon's description on the opposite page. Does the repeating crossbow require two hands to use? Are there circumstances under which it can be fired in one hand, as with all other crossbows?

You can shoot a repeating crossbow one-handed, once, just like a light crossbow. You need two hands to hold a repeating crossbow and pull the reloading lever, and you need two hands to load a new case of bolts into the crossbow.

The description of the shuriken in the *Player's Handbook* says you can't apply your Strength bonus to shuriken damage. Can you use the +2 damage bonus from Weapon Specialization if you're specialized with shuriken?

Yes, you can apply the damage bonus for Weapon Specialization in shuriken, but only if the target is within 30 feet. Only the first shuriken you throw in an attack gets the bonus damage. As "Sage Advice" noted in issue #276, only one shuriken thrown in an attack has any real degree of precision; the other one or two are just along for the ride.

Is the throwing rate for throwing shuriken always three shuriken a round, or is that three per normal attack? (So if you have three attacks, can you actually throw nine shurikens?)

You throw three shuriken as a single attack. If you're allowed more than one attack each round, you could throw more than three shuriken; however, unless you have the Quick Draw feat, you'll need an action to draw more shuriken.

Say a rogue attempts to perform a sneak attack on a target, and the target is flanked and engaged with another character, but is nevertheless aware of the rogue. Does the rogue get the extra damage dice for the sneak attack? My DM believes that a foe who is aware of the rogue can protect herself and is not subject to sneak attacks. I disagree.

Whenever a rogue flanks a target or the target is denied a Dexterity bonus to Armor Class (such as when caught flat-footed), the rogue's attack is a sneak attack. It makes no difference how many attacks the rogue makes or whether the opponent is aware of the rogue.

When can a monk use his Wisdom modifier to Armor Class? I can understand that it's added to the Armor Class

CORRECTION "How To Create a Monster"

There's an error in the **Challenge Rating Guesstimator** on page 52 of *Dragon Magazine* issue #276. Use the new table on the following page instead. Note that the overlap in Hit Dice (for example, 3-6 then 6-8) is intentional—a creature with 6 HD is on the cusp and could either be a CR 1 or CR 2 creature.

Also, replace the word **modifier** with the word **bonus** on the "Feats" line for each monster that has "Int modifier" on that line. For example, a fey's "Feats" line should read:

Feats: 1 + Int bonus (+1/4 extra Hit Dice)

Do not factor in negative modifiers—only bonuses count when figuring out how many feats a monster should have.

POWERPLAY

BY BILL W. BALDWIN

A Little Fighter Goes a Long Way

Does your rogue or arcane spellcaster seem a little weak in combat? If you won't suffer the 20% experience penalty for it, add a level of fighter. For the price of one level you get all simple and martial weapon proficiencies, all armor and shield proficiencies, a +1 to your base attack bonus, 1d10 hit points, +2 to your Fort save, and a free combat-related feat.

(normal), Armor Class (flat-footed), and Armor Class (touch attack). Is it taken into account when the monk is carrying either a moderate or heavy load? What of the monk is surprised or flat-footed?

The monk's Wisdom modifier to Armor Class applies all the time (except when the monk is helpless or wearing armor).

Can a multiclass rogue or a rogue with additional weapon proficiencies perform a sneak attack with a weapon that's not the rogue's weapon list? For instance, can a fighter/rogue make a sneak attack with a broadsword?

A rogue can use any kind of weapon in a sneak attack (subject to the limits listed in the sneak attack description on page 47 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Is it possible to flank an opponent when you're using a reach weapon, such as a halberd, from more than 5 feet away? What about with ranged weapons?

You can flank any opponent within melee reach, even if you use a reach weapon to put the foe within reach. If you're out of melee reach and have a ranged weapon, you cannot flank an opponent.

Can you attack through an ally's square with a reach weapon? Would the target have cover? Is there a chance you could hit your ally?

You can attack through another creature's square with a reach weapon. It doesn't make a difference if it's an ally or foe; your target gets cover from the intervening creature. If the intervening creature and the target are the same size, the target has 50% cover (+4 to AC) and is not subject to attacks of opportunity from you. If you miss, there is no chance that you will strike the intervening creature.

When firing a ranged weapon, does the -4 attack penalty for firing into a melee apply when only one combatant is able to make melee attacks due to differing melee reach. For example, if an ogre (10-foot reach) is fighting a human (5-foot reach) that is 10 feet away, and an elf fires an arrow at the ogre, is that firing into a melee? If not, then what if the human was using a longspear? Would natural reach be handled differently than reach from a weapon?

If your target is at least 10 feet away from its nearest melee opponent, you don't suffer the -4 attack penalty (see page 124 of the *Player's Handbook*).

If a character charges a foe who has a reach weapon (such as a longspear) set to receive a charge, does the creature receiving the charge get an attack of opportunity? Does the character with the spear get to attack for being set to receive a charge *and* get an attack of opportunity before the charging character gets to make his attack? What about a creature with reach who has prepared to receive a charge?

Preparing an action doesn't affect who you threaten or impair your ability to make attacks of opportunity. If a character with a reach weapon (or a creature with natural reach) prepares an attack, the creature makes the prepared attack when the first foe comes within reach. If the foe survives the prepared attack and leaves the 5-foot square where the prepared attack was delivered, it draws an attack of opportunity from the creature because it's leaving an enemy's threatened space.

How is the ghostwalker's painful reckoning power supposed to work? *Sword and Fist* says that you get this bonus after you lose 50% or more of your hit points in an initial encounter. Does this mean that if my character is at 50% or less hit points in the middle of a fight, I get this bonus for the remainder of the fight? Would I also get the bonus if one or the other party flees and a fight happens with the same foe at a later date? If so, do I have to wait until I drop to 50% of my hit points or less before I

CHALLENGE RATING GUESSTIMATOR

Effective Hit Dice*	Challenge Rating
Less than 3	½
3-6	1
6-8	2
8-10	3
10-13	4
13-16	5
16-19	6
19-22	7
22-25	8
25-28	9
28-31	10
31-34	11
34-37	12
37-40	13
40-43	14
43-46	15
46-49	16
49-52	17
52-55	18
55-58	19
58-61	20
62 or more	21 or higher

*Divide average hit points by 4.5 to calculate the creature's basic Hit Dice, then and add one or two for each special attack or useful special quality the creature has. Add two for an AC of 20 or higher.

ERRATA Swallow Whole

The text describing the swallow whole special attack (page 9 of the *Monster Manual*) should also say:

Creatures swallowed whole are considered grappled. A creature with the swallow whole special attack does not suffer any penalties for grappling creatures it has swallowed; thus it retains its Dexterity bonus to AC and can make attacks, cast spells, and threaten squares normally.

If a creature's description of the swallow whole special attack allows swallowed creatures to cut their way free, it should say, **"light piercing or slashing weapon"** rather than, **"Small or Tiny slashing weapon."**

get the bonus? How many "initial encounters" can be stacked up? What kinds of things is the bonus effective against? What other bonuses does the painful reckoning bonus stack with?

If the ghostwalker finishes an encounter and has lost 50% or more of his hit points during that encounter, he forever after gets his painful reckoning bonus against the foe or foes he faced in that encounter, provided the ghostwalker is alive when the encounter finishes. The DM must decide when the encounter is "finished," but if one side flees, that's pretty much the end of the encounter. The bonus does not automatically apply whenever the ghostwalker's hit points fall below 50%

Once a ghostwalker gains a painful reckoning bonus against a particular foe, he can't gain it again against the same opponent (though if the ghostwalker goes up a level, his painful reckoning bonus goes up against all foes). He does not, however, have to wait until his hit points fall below 50%; he gets the bonus whenever he faces the foe again.

A painful reckoning bonus applies to Armor Class, attack, and damage rolls, as noted in the class description. It stacks with all other bonuses except itself. Note that the Armor Class bonus applies against touch attacks and when the ghostwalker is caught flat-footed or otherwise denied his Dexterity bonus.

The ghostwalker's etherealness and shadow walk powers are listed as extraordinary abilities. Shouldn't they be spell-like or supernatural? If not, they are capable of using these abilities within an antimagic area, right? What about the ghostwalker's other powers?

The etherealness and shadow walk powers should be supernatural. *Feign death* should be spell-like. Resolute aura should be extraordinary.

The Pain Touch feat from *Sword and Fist* makes an opponent that the user has stunned with a successful stunning attack nauseated. What is a "stunning attack," and what good is making a foe who's already stunned nauseated?

In this case, a "stunning attack" is a successful use of the Stunning Fist feat from the *Player's Handbook* or the monk's stunning attack power. Opponents who fail their saving throws are stunned for 1 round, as normal, then nauseated for 1 round after that (see page 280 in the *Player's Handbook* for the effects of nausea).

The prerequisites for the Pain Touch feat are base attack bonus +2 or more, the Stunning Fist feat, and a Wisdom of 19+. The Stunning Fist feat requires an attack bonus of +8 or higher, so aren't the Pain Touch prerequisites in error?

In this case, no. The monk's stunning attack counts as a "virtual" Stunning Fist feat and any monk with a base attack bonus of +2 or more and a Wisdom of 19 or higher can qualify for Pain Touch.

How does the Circle Kick feat work for a monk or another character with multiple attacks? What about a monk who uses a flurry of blows? Does each successful unarmed attack roll allow a second attack against a different opponent?

A character using Circle Kick makes one attack. If this single attack hits, the character makes a second attack at the same attack bonus as the first.

How does the Dirty Fighting feat work with multiple attacks?

Just as with Circle Kick (see previous question), a character using Dirty Fighting makes one attack and adds an extra 1d4 points of damage if the attack succeeds. Dirty fighting is not effective against opponents that are not subject to critical hits.

Dirty Fighting isn't a bad deal if you're allowed only one attack a round, but it's not a great option for high-level characters. You might consider an Improved Dirty Fighting feat:

Improved Dirty Fighting [General]

You are a master of the brutal and effective fighting tactics of the streets and back alleys.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6, Dirty Fighting

Benefit: When you perform the full attack action, you can give up your regular attacks and instead make one melee attack at your full base attack bonus. If successful, your attack deals extra damage, as follows:

Base Attack	Extra damage
+5 to +9	+2d4
+10 to +14	+3d4
+15 to +19	+4d4
+20 or more	+5d4

Can a rogue use Dirty Fighting in the same round as a sneak attack?

No. Both rely on the ability to smack a foe where it really hurts.

How does the Lightning Fists feat work with multiple attacks or flurry of blows? Can you combine Lightning Fist with a flurry of blows?

Lightning Fists works exactly like a flurry of blows, except that you add two extra attacks and you suffer a -5 penalty to all your attacks. Lighting Fists actually isn't a very good option unless the opponent is really easy to hit or you can expect to deal a lot of damage with each hit (or both). You cannot use Lightning Fists and flurry of blows at the same time.

The Expert Tactician feat lets you take an extra partial action when a foe is denied her Dexterity bonus during combat. Exactly when do you get your extra partial action? Do you take the action immediately when the opponent is denied her Dexterity bonus? If you attack as your partial action, you must attack the foe who is denied a Dexterity bonus. What is an "attack" exactly? What happens when more than one foe is denied a Dexterity bonus? How close to a foe must you be to get the benefit of the feat?

The feat allows you to make one melee attack (or anything that be can done as a melee attack) against one foe who is within melee and denied her Dexterity bonus for any reason. You take your extra attack when it's your turn, either before or after your regular action. If several foes are within melee reach and denied Dexterity bonus, you can attack only one of them. This corrects the feat description in the *Sword and Fist* book.

If you have the Snatch Arrows feat can you use it only once per round, like the Deflect Arrows feat? Or can it be used multiple times in a round?

As the feat description says, Snatch Arrows works exactly like Deflect Arrows, except you catch the missile instead of just deflecting it. You can try to catch one missile each round, and if you do so, you cannot also try to deflect a missile that same round.

Say my monk has the Snatch Arrows feat and the Throw Anything feat. Can I

catch an arrow or bolt and throw it back at the attacker?

No. The Throw Anything feat allows you to throw a weapon. Ammunition is not a "weapon" for this purpose. Nor can you throw something that is not a melee weapon, such as a bow or crossbow.

How often can you attempt Feign Weakness against one opponent? Does the Bluff check take a standard action or is it a free action?

You can use Feign Weakness as often as the DM lets you. You might want to add a +5 bonus to the foe's Sense Motive check for the second and further attempts against the same foe on the same day.

Using Feign Weakness is a standard action, just like a feint (see the Bluff skill description on page 64 of the *Player's Handbook*), except that if you succeed you get to make your attack immediately.

Which of the various new feats from *Sword and Fist* can fighters take as free feats? The *Player's Handbook* has a list, but *Sword and Fist* does not mention that they are added to that list.

That's because none of them have been added to the list.

Does a Fighter with the Knockdown feat get a free attack from Improved Trip against a creature that he trips due to a knockdown?

No.

If you have the Prone Attack feat, can you regain your feet as a free action if you don't attack?

Technically, Prone Attack lets you get up free only if you make a successful attack. I suppose you could claim to attack the floor (using the strike an object rule) and then get up if you hit it; remember that any attack automatically fails if you roll a 1. In any case, you have to at least use the attack action to get up, so you can make only a single move after getting up.

What classes from the *Sword and Fist* book can combine their attack bonus with monk attack bonus for purposes of getting multiple unarmed attacks?

Only the classes that let you freely multiclass with monk (the red avenger and the weapon master) and the drunken master stack their attack bonuses in this fashion.

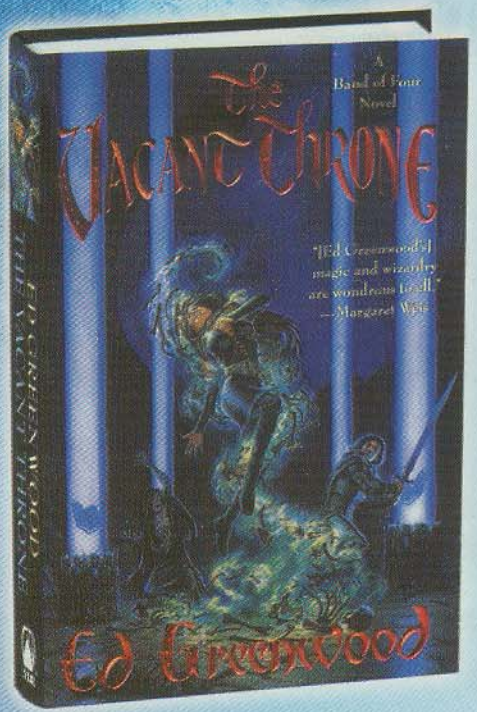
Is there any limit to how many 5-foot steps a master samurai can make when using the supreme cleave ability? The Cleave feat says you can attack another creature in the immediate vicinity when you drop a foe with a melee attack. What is the definition of "immediate vicinity"? How does that change when using supreme cleave.

A character can take only one 5-foot step each round, and then only if the character has not otherwise moved during the round. Supreme cleave lets you step between Cleave attacks, but you still can step only once.

In the case of Cleave, "immediate vicinity" means within melee reach. A character using supreme cleave can first take a 5-foot step to determine who is within melee reach before choosing a target for a Cleave attack.

D

From the bestselling creator of *The Forgotten Realms*™ comes the exciting sequel to *The Kingless Land*



The Vacant Throne by Ed Greenwood

0-312-86722-0 $25.95 • Available in hardcover April 2001

The struggle to bring the rightful king to the throne of Aglirta continues as the valiant Band of Four quests for a secret that will defeat ambitious barons and devious, inhuman forces.

"Ed Greenwood is the master of fantasy adventure world-building." —Margaret Weis

"A new series, a new land, and a band of adventurers we can root for—it's got everything a fantasy fan could ask for and more. Much more." —*SF Site* on *The Kingless Land*

See how it all began . . . The Kingless Land
0-812-58014-1 • $6.99/$8.99 Can.
Available now in paperback!

"Amazing and indescribable...fast-paced with an enormous barrage of pyrotechnics...all the genius of Greenwood action with all the genius of Greenwood characterization." —*Dragon* magazine

www.tor.com TOR
www.tor.com

Dragon Mirth

Got a good one?
Send it in!

"Dragonmirth"
c/o *Dragon Magazine*
1801 Lind Ave. S.W.
Renton, WA 98055

RPG BLUES©
BY DELGADO JR.
DUDE, I JUST HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT YOUR DIVORCE...I'M SO SORRY.
YA KNOW, THE JUDGE AWARDED HER HALF MY SPELLS.
"OUCH"

AARON WILLIAMS

"I CLAIM THE CELESTIAL OPAL OF ELYSIUM IN THE NAME OF MY WIFE, WHO THINKS IT WILL MATCH OUR LIVING ROOM DRAPES PERFECTLY."

LOOK, IT'S SIMPLE. I GET 3 ATTACKS EVERY 2 ROUNDS. SO I ATTACK, AND THEN YOU ATTACK, AND THEN I GET TO ATTACK TWICE...

MATTHEW P. WARD

"Looks like the only monster in this whole *lame* dungeon is that stupid gelatinous cube that's been following us around."
TONY MOSELEY

DUNGEONCRAFT

Off to the Races

by Ray Winninger

Send email to: scalemail@wizards.com

"Dungeoncraft" c/o *Dragon Magazine*
1801 Lind Ave. S.W. • Renton, WA 98055

Last month, "Dungeoncraft" hinted at the basic political situation of the new campaign world. Since it's a rough-and-tumble "land that time forgot" setting, the world is dominated by a loose collection of primitive tribes with little or no central organization. Five tribes were created to get the campaign off the ground—one elven, one dwarven, one half-orc, and two human. The next step is to start adding details. In the spirit of the First Rule of Dungeoncraft, we only need enough information about each tribe to allow the campaign to get underway. Once simple details on the various tribes are decided, basic political and geographical characteristics about each of them can be created.

The Solaani (Elves)

Elves usually enjoy the oldest and most advanced civilization on the typical D&D game world, so the elves of this world literally live higher up than the other tribes. They inhabit lofty citadels located in the mountains. As a consequence, they've managed to tame a variety of flying reptiles with whom they share an almost supernatural bond that is now several centuries old. An elite order of elven knights ride into battle mounted on these flying creatures.

As on most D&D worlds, the elven civilization is the oldest culture on the planet. This suggests that it was actually the elves who were responsible for the downfall of the lizardfolk civilization that once dominated the world (see issue #280). Combining this idea with the hint of tragedy that is usually implicit in the elven culture inspires an idea for an interesting secret, neatly taking care of the obligation to the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft. Somehow, during the final conflict of that great war, the elven leaders were secretly forced to sacrifice the future of their own people in order to secure a victory over the lizardfolk. As a result, the elven civilization is gradually waning and doomed to die out.

Culturally, the elves are a people of ceremony and tradition. Although still less technologically advanced than the average culture on the average D&D game world, the elves are certainly the most sophisticated inhabitants of the lost world. Theirs is the only living culture that has evolved its own written language, the single most important tool the elves have used to safeguard and pass along generations' worth of lore and tradition.

Within the campaign, the elven civilization can function as a sort of library. The elves are a convenient source of mystical secrets and historical facts that will be needed upon occasion to serve as clues and springboards into adventures. This notion leads to the idea that knowledge is somehow tied to the social hierarchy within elven civilization—every time an elf attains a higher social status, the tribal elders entrust her with a few new secrets. This way, only the tribe's highest-ranking elders know everything, a fact that conveniently explains why PC elves don't begin play knowing many of the world's secrets.

The Inuundi (Dwarves)

Dwarves are the great craftsmen of most D&D game worlds. This characteristic suggests that perhaps it was the dwarves who originally built all the cities and tunnels inhabited by the lizardfolk who once dominated the planet. This in turn suggests that the entire dwarven race was once enslaved by the lizardfolk. Just before the empire of the lizardfolk fell, a Spartacus-type hero led an uprising of the dwarven slaves and secured their freedom. In fact, the results of this upheaval were probably so catastrophic

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So now that the basic assortment of tribes has been decided, a quick summary of the overall political situation is in order. The chart below explains the relationship between the tribes. You can cross-index any two tribes to find out how they view each other.

	Solaani	Inuundi	Half-Breed	Bruun	Vistiiri	lizardfolk
Solaani	P	N	S	N	F	E
Inuundi	N	P	S	N	T	E
Half-Breed	S	S	P	S	T	S
Bruun	N	N	S	P	S	E
Vistiiri	F	T	T	S	P	T
lizardfolk	E	E	S	E	T	P

P: Each tribe generally prefers dealing with its own kind
T: The Vistiiri trade with all most other inhabitants of the lost world, including some lizardfolk. The one exception is the separatist Bruun faction. By and large, the Vistiiri have cordial, but not particularly friendly relations with their trading partners.
F: The two tribes favor each other and enjoy friendly relations.
S: The tribes view each other with suspicion, though they are not openly enemies.
E: The tribes generally view each other as enemies.

that it seems natural to tie the revolt into the downfall of the lizardfolk. Thus, at some point the leader of the dwarven uprising made an alliance with the leaders of the Solaani and it was this pact that both bought the dwarves their freedom and sealed the Solaani victory. The elders of the dwarven tribe might even know the secret about the forthcoming end of the elven civilization.

Their background suggests that the dwarves of the lost world are somewhat isolationist. Although they have reached a tacit understanding with the elves, their centuries of slavery have made them generally distrustful of outsiders. Even now, several generations after they secured their freedom, only the hardiest dwarves have much contact with the outside world. The debate over whether or not to become more involved with non-dwarves might be a major issue that divides dwarven society. A growing faction of younger dwarves might be urging their elders to strengthen ties with the rest of the world. The existence of such a faction provides a convenient means to explain PC dwarves, who obviously don't spend their time hidden away with the rest of the tribe.

The fact that the dwarves are isolationists implies that their home is naturally cut off from the outside world. In observance of D&D tradition, a subterranean home seems to be in order. The dwarves of the lost world will inhabit an underground citadel they once constructed for the lizardfolk. This citadel is just one terminus of a huge network of underground structures and tunnels the dwarves constructed for their former masters. These subterranean passages allowed the lizardfolk to travel across the continent—they were as important to the reptilian empire as roads were to the ancient Romans. Since the civilization of the lizardfolk collapsed, darker, less pleasant things began to occupy the tunnels, and even the dwarves fear to enter all but a few of them. This last bit of lore should guarantee an adequate supply of "dungeons" all over the continent. It also suggests an important role the dwarves can play in the campaign. Theoretically, the dwarves might be the only inhabitants of the lost world who are familiar with the locations and secrets of all the dungeons and tunnels. Thus, the dwarves can easily serve as an important source of ancient maps and geographical tidbits that can be used as adventure hooks.

The Second Rule of Dungeoncraft requires a secret about the dwarves: The dwarves are actually a genetic offshoot of the elves. Generations ago, before the dwarves were enslaved, the dwarves and elves were one people. The elf leader at the time voluntarily offered up half of his tribe into servitude to protect the remaining half. Over the generations, natural selection forced the enslaved elves to evolve and adapt to their work in the tunnels. Gradually, they became shorter, stockier, and more hairy.

GENERATIONS AGO . . . THE DWARVES AND ELVES WERE ONE PEOPLE.

The Half-Breeds (Half-Orcs)

As noted last month, on most D&D game worlds, half-orcs play the role of the ultimate outcasts. Somewhat shunned by polite civilization and orcs alike, the half-breeds are often forced to look out for themselves and occupy whatever little niche in society they can manage to craft for themselves.

Figuring out how half-orcs fit into the world obviously forces one to figure out how orcs fit in, and you shouldn't create too much too fast. But what if the half-orcs aren't really half-orcs at all, but half-lizardfolk? In many respects, the new campaign is set up so that lizardfolk will play the role traditionally occupied by orcs: powerful evil humanoids who oppose elves and dwarves. Although their empire is now shattered, it's easy to imagine tribes of scattered lizardfolk still roaming the landscape and perhaps providing the lion's share of the players' opposition early in the campaign. Since it's already established that the lizardfolk are slavers, it's easy to imagine them siring half-breed children, and these unfortunates would suffer the same fate reserved for half-orcs in the typical D&D game world. Another strong advantage of this plan is that the unique half-lizardfolk race helps reinforce the campaign's unique identity.

Most of the half-breeds on the lost world live on the fringes of other tribal societies and integrate into those cultures as best they can. Because the lizardfolk are so hated and mistrusted by most of the world's other inhabitants, the half-breeds are the victims of a lot of prejudice, and most of those who are accepted into other societies are only adopted reluctantly. Still, the hardships tend to make the half-breeds who survive resourceful and durable.

To make things a tad more interesting, there are rumors all across the lost world of a whole tribe entirely made up of half-lizardfolk. Most believe that this tribe lives somewhere within the ancient dwarven tunnels and occasionally ventures forth to raid other tribes and liberate more half-breeds. Many half-lizardfolk dream of one day finding this tribe and joining its ranks.

The Second Rule of Dungeoncraft requires a secret about the half breeds: This semi-secret tribe exists, and its charismatic leader is not a half-breed at all, but an elf who uses magic to disguise her appearance. The elf has been secretly assembling the half-breed army to combat some enormous calamity she expects to arise over the next several years. She originally attempted to convince her fellow Solaani of the danger decades ago, but when it was clear they would not accept her warning, she began assembling her army. At this time, not even her followers are aware of her true nature or grand purpose.

The Bruun (Human)

Most D&D game worlds are human-centric, and the lost world isn't an exception. At least two-thirds of the campaign's player characters and important NPCs will be human. To encourage such a trend, the world needs a couple of interesting human tribes to attract the players' attention.

The largest and most populous band of humans in the campaign's starting area is a tribe of formidable warriors known as the Bruun. In many ways, the Bruun are an echo of the Spartans. Bruun society believes that the best way to insure survival is to begin brutally training the young at the earliest possible age. By the age of twelve, a warrior of the Bruun is a fierce combatant who

has already learned how to survive alone in the jungle for several days. These harsh measures not only prepare the youngsters for life on the lost world, but they cull out the weak, allowing the tribe to expend its resources on those with the best chance for survival.

Across the lost world, the Bruun are known not only for their battle prowess and ferocity but also for their elaborate festivals. Several times each year, all Bruun take part in complex rituals that re-enact various parables, legends, and important moments in tribe's history. The ceremonies are the means by which the Bruun hand down important lessons.

Two distinct "subtribes" of Bruun inhabit the starting area of the lost world—one basically good-aligned and the other mostly evil. Such a schism makes a certain amount of sense—the larger a primitive tribe gets, the more difficult it becomes to hold the tribe together. The division also accommodates a broader range of Bruun PCs. The basic origin of the separation was a sharp disagreement among tribal elders as to how to insure the survival of the tribe. One faction believed in using conquest to consolidate the tribe's power, while a second refused to subjugate any free creature if it did not pose a direct threat to the Bruun. Eventually, some seventy-five years before the campaign begins, the former faction left the main tribe to seek its own destiny. Both factions of Bruun now inhabit their own makeshift strongholds within the jungle and the surrounding hills.

The Bruun schism provides a good idea for a secret. The leaders of the evil-aligned "conquest" faction were actually subtly manipulated by a mysterious stranger, who is the real father of their beliefs. To this day, the stranger still visits the leaders of the separatist faction and exerts an influence over them. Inexplicably, he doesn't appear to have aged a day in the last three-quarters of a century. Over time, the stranger has taken his puppets down darker and darker paths, subtly fueling their bloodlust and need for conquest. Lately, he has introduced the leaders of the faction to an eerie magic ritual during which they drink the blood of a tyrannosaurus, the oldest and most powerful of all the creatures on the planet; in return, they receive incredible raging strength and prowess. Of all the Bruun, only the elders of the separatist tribe have had any contact with the stranger and know he exists.

The stranger is actually a were-raptor, a shape shifter who can change between human and dinosaur forms. The were-raptors are servants of the tyrannosaurs, who possess a secret spiritual and malevolent intelligence. Although they are all but extinct and rarely encountered on the lost world, the tyrannosaurs are much more than mere dinosaurs and still subtly manipulate the affairs of the planet like some sort of dark gods. Through their servant, they are slowly guiding the Bruun separatists toward a secret sinister destiny.

The Vistiiri (Human)

The second human tribe is a group of nomads known as the Vistiiri. Although they are not as populous or influential as the Bruun, the Vistiiri still comfortably out-number the Solaani and Inuundi in the campaign's starting area. Although they boast their own impressive army and they are more than capable of defending themselves, the Vistiiri basically believe in peace. To them, life on the lost world is already hard enough without going out to seek additional conflict.

The Vistiiri do not inhabit any sort of fixed villages and instead wander from place to place, following a carefully calculated plan of migration. Their aim is to avoid the hunting trails followed by the larger carnivorous dinosaurs at various points in the year. Along their routes, they conduct a lot of trade with neighboring tribes, making them a good source of information about events in the region.

Thanks to their frequent contact with the Solaani, the Vistiiri have developed a true love of song, and just about every member of the tribe carries a musical instrument. In fact, an interesting tribal custom has arisen around the Vistiiri's fondness for music. Whenever an older member of the tribe is on his or her deathbed, the Vistiiri craft a unique musical instrument and place it at the elder's side. When death comes, the Vistiiri believe that the voice of the elder departs the body and moves into the instrument, where it can be heard whenever the instrument is played thereafter. These special instruments have a number of important functions in Vistiiri society. Skilled bards seem to have the ability to commune with the departed spirits of the elders by playing elaborate compositions on them. Also, the Vistiiri prefer to go into battle with the voices of their ancestors before them; a whole troop of musicians producing a cacophonous symphony on hundreds of unique instruments always stands at the head of their armies.

Their secret? The head of the Vistiiri tribe carries an unusual musical instrument as his badge of honor. The instrument houses the voice of one of the oldest and wisest departed chieftains of the tribe. For generations now, unknown to all, the spirit of the departed chieftain has been the real ruler of the tribe—the rulers who have followed him have done little more than unwittingly follow his instructions. This explains why the Vistiiri chieftain is usually found alone in his tent, obsessively playing the instrument; he is actually receiving instructions from the elder. As sinister as this sounds, it's actually good for the Vistiiri people. The departed elder is an excellent leader and his spirit has already guided the tribe through calamities that his earthly ancestors could not have handled on their own.

GRUNCHELLO
BY JERRY SELTZER
WHY IS YOUR FACE TWISTED UP LIKE THAT? ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU BETTER RUN CAUSE I HAV—AH AH.
OH NO!
AH AHHH AH AH
ACHOO!!
CAN'T YOU COVER YOUR MOUTH WHEN YOU SNEEZE?
MY UNCLE DRAK DID THAT ONCE. NOW WE CALL HIM STUBBY.

WHAT'S NEW
WITH PHIL AND DIXIE
THIS MONTH WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PRACTICAL JOKES.
YES YES, HO HO- LET'S ALL LAUGH AT THE GIRL.
AS YOU WISH, OH TEENY-WEENY QUEEN OF EVIL!
YOU ARE SO DEAD!
PRACTICAL JOKES IN GAMING CAN BE PRETTY DIABOLICAL, SINCE PEOPLE CAN BE RESURRECTED AFTERWARD.
THAT APPLIES TO PERPETRATORS AS WELL AS VICTIMS, FUNNY MAN.
DIXIE'S DREAM LAIR
SINCE PRACTICAL JOKES EXIST TO TARNISH A PERSON'S DIGNITY, YOU WANT TO AIM HIGH. IT'S MORE FUN TO PIE A PALADIN THAN A TAVERN WENCH.
MMM... PIE! THANKS!
... SOMETIMES.
BUT FOR PEOPLE WHO TAKE THEMSELVES ENTIRELY TOO SERIOUSLY, YOU CAN'T BEAT SOMEONE WITH AN EVIL ALIGNMENT!
NRRR!!
XENA
FIGHTIN' BABE OUTFIT
ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH TO BUY IT?
WHAT WITH ALL THAT RANTING AND PLOTTING, BUILDING WEAPONS AND 'BRAIN BOOSTERS', IT'S PRETTY DARN EASY TO SWITCH A FEW LABELS ON SOME GIZMOS, THEN JUST SIT BACK AND WATCH THE SHOW!
"OBSERVE THE EFFECT OF MY DYNAMO RAY!! Hee hee hee hee!
ALL RIGHT ALL RIGHT! YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT!
NOW SWITCH ME BACK! THE CAT ALMOST GOT ME AGAIN.
IS THE CAT OKAY?
ONCE IT GETS THE FORK OUT, IT'LL BE FINE.
OKAY, SO- THIS DEVICE HERE?
OH YES.
CLICK!
NOW I HOPE YOU'VE LEARNED-
URK!!
ZOP!
HA! HOW DO YOU LIKE MY PARALYZATION DEVICE, 'MR. PRACTICAL JOKER'? NOW YOU CAN LIE THERE- HELPLESS- AND ONCE I'VE REGAINED MY SIZE, YOU'LL BEG ME TO SHOW YOU MY DYNAMO RAY! NOW TELL ME WHERE THE ENLARGER IS!
...
um... PERHAPS THIS WAS ONE OF THOSE PLANS WHERE I SHOULD'VE GIVEN A LITTLE MORE THOUGHT TO THE TIMING...
OH NO- I THINK IT'S PERFECT!
BRAIN PLUS
END

www.studiofoglio.com

Huff Huff

Little things

can make a big difference

like knowing who gets the face full of acid

When your party stumbles onto something disagreeable, knowing who's standing where can get important pretty fast. And whether you're running through the *Forge of Fury* adventure or some devious creation of your own, official **Dungeons & Dragons®** miniatures will help bring imaginations to life and make combats run more quickly. So, pick up what you need at your hobby or game store — and make it easier for your players to see their characters' lives flash before their eyes.

www.wizards.com/dnd

d20 system

Wizards of the Coast

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® MINIATURES

All trademarks are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©2001 Wizards.

© 2001 Nexon Inc. All Rights Reserved. Nexus and Dark Ages are trademarks of Nexon Inc. Developed by Nexon Inc.